

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES. SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per Year. Copyright, 1909, by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

No. 353.

NEW YORK, JULY 23, 1909.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST TRAILING A TREASURE, OR, A MYSTERY OF OLD MEXICO.

By AN OLD SCOUT



Suddenly a bright light flashed through the darkness, completely drowning that given out by the lantern. There was a clatter of hoofs, and then the Headless Horseman dashed by, holding the head with the fiery eyes at arms-length.

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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1909, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

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CHAPTER I.

OUR FRIENDS HEAR OF AN AZTEC TREASURE.

It was near sunset on a warm day in early summer.

Young Wild West and his friends had just halted in a little glen in that wild and picturesque part of Arizona that lies close to the border of Old Mexico.

For two days the party had traveled without meeting a human being, or seeing anything in the way of civilization.

The Champion Deadshot of the West, as our dashing boy hero of the Wild West was called by his friends and acquaintances, had come down from Tombstone for no other purpose than to look up something in the line of adventure.

It had become a second nature to him to look for perils, for he had made such a success of everything he attempted that he never felt just right unless there was something to keep him on the alert for danger.

Being the owner of several mines that paid handsome dividends, he could well afford to travel about the wilds of the West, which, at the time of which we write, could be found without much trouble.

Railroads were not so common out that way as they are at the present, and lawless bands of Mexicans, Indians and Americans, too, were to be met almost everywhere in the parts where law and order was almost unknown.

Of medium height, athletic, handsome and always cool and resourceful, no matter what the conditions were, dashing Young Wild West had earned for himself a reputation that many an older Westerner would have been proud of.

His two partners, Cheyenne Charlie, the scout, and

Jim Dart, a Western boy about his own age, always traveled with him, and for the two or three years previous to the opening of this story, the "girls" had accompanied them on most of their trips.

By the "girls" we refer to Arietta Murdock, the golden-haired sweetheart of Young Wild West; Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart, and Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie.

The latter was a young woman, whose age was between twenty and thirty, but she was called a girl by our hero and his partners, just the same.

Cheyenne Charlie might have passed the thirty mark, but he hardly looked it, and he was just as boyish in his ways as were Wild and Jim.

He was a thorough plainsman and scout, but he lacked the ability to lead, because he was one who easily lost his temper, and when he became one of the partners of Young Wild West, the level-headed, dashing young hero, who never missed what he shot at when he pulled a trigger, he found that he had just struck the "right gait," as he put it.

Like Young Wild West, the scout wore his hair long. It being almost as black as the raven's wing, and wearing a mustache of the same hue, he made a striking appearance.

Our hero's hair was of a light chestnut, and thicker than Charlie's, and with a broad-brimmed sombrero set well back on his head, his boyish face was set off to the best advantage.

Jim Dart generally kept his hair cut pretty close. He had started that way, and he held to it.

But in general appearance he was just as much of a Westerner as his partners.

They all wore fancy and durable hunting suits of buckskin, but in the climate they were now in they seldom

wore coats, preferring to appear in their bright-colored silk shirts.

Hop Wah and Wing Wah, the two Chinese servants employed by our hero and his partners, had just begun putting up the tents as our story opens.

They were typical Chinamen, as far as looks went, and the ordinary observer would have put them down as the very innocent sort.

But it would have been a mistake, just the same, especially on Hop Wah.

He was an exception to his race, it might be said.

The fact was that he was often called Young Wild West's Clever Chinaman, because he was a magician, and could do all sorts of sleight-of-hand tricks as well as a professional performer.

Added to this, he was a card sharp, and he could beat the best of men, who followed gambling for a profession, and who used cheating in order to win money.

That might have been a failing the Chinaman had, but if it was, he had another.

He liked whisky, which he called "tanglefoot," and sometimes he would even steal it.

But in spite of his shortcomings, Hop had been of great value to our friends since he had become a fixture of the party.

On more than one occasion he had been the direct means of saving their lives, and all through his sleight-of-hand and natural cleverness.

It might have been added that the Celestial could hardly have been induced to leave the employ of Young Wild West, for he had learned to love the boy and the rest, and regarded himself as one who should stay with them through thick and thin.

The wages he received was really no big inducement, for Hop could draw a pretty good salary with a traveling show, if he felt so disposed.

But he always had a couple of thousand dollars about him, even if it had not been saved from his wages.

He made money playing draw poker with the card sharps he came in contact with.

Wing, who was his brother, by the way, had once been a "sport," but when he found he could not "hold a candle" to Hop, he settled down and became just a plain Chinese, willing to do his part of the work, and when there was nothing else to do, to doze in the shade.

"One thing about it, boys," remarked our hero, nodding to his two partners, "we always manage to strike a pretty good camping place. I reckon this is as good as if we had ordered it made for us. There is plenty of water here, and the grass and mesquite would feed our horses for a week, if we wanted to stay here that long. But we are not the first to stop here, it seems. There was a fire kindled here not many hours ago, and by the looks of things, there must have been three or four men here."

"Well, we've been follerin' a trail putty nigh all day, Wild," Cheyenne Charlie answered. "Most likely ther ones as made ther trail stopped here."

"Oh, of course. There is no doubt about that. There are the hoofprints of their horses as they left. They probably went away this morning."

"That's right," spoke up Jim Dart, who never had a

great deal to say, though he was always ready to act when it became necessary.

The two Celestials worked like machinery in putting up the tents.

They were so used to doing it that they were but a few minutes at it, after the pack-horses were unloaded.

The girls then turned their attention to fixing things so there was more of a home-like air to the scene, and then Wing turned his attention to preparing the evening meal.

Hop usually cared for the horses, but Wild and his partners helped in on this occasion.

Before the sun went down everything had been attended to, and they had nothing to do but to wait for the supper.

The coffee was boiling away merrily now, and the odor that came from it mingled with that of the broiling venison.

At the last little town they had stopped at they had stocked up with flour and meal, and Anna had turned to and helped the cook out by making some corn muffins.

These were always looked upon as a treat by our friends, for the scout's wife could not be matched at making them, in their way of thinking.

When the meal was ready they went at it as only hungry mortals can.

The outdoor life they led gave them an appetite that surely had a telling effect on the provisions and game.

As the sun went down a cooling breeze came up, and all was peace and quiet in the wild region.

An Arizona sunset is said by many to be one of the grandest sights that Nature provides for us, but to our friends it was old, and they scarcely ever took more than passing notice.

"He's gone fur another day," remarked Cheyenne Charlie, nodding in the direction of where the sun had last been seen. "I reckon we couldn't git along very well without him; but he sartinly has been shinin' hot today, an' no mistake."

"Allee samee velly nicee now, so be," remarked Hop Wah, who overheard the remark.

"Yes, that's right, Hop," the scout answered. "It's so fine now that Wing can't hardly keep his eyes open while he's washin' up ther tin plates an' cups. That heathen beats anything I ever seen fur bein' sleepy. He sleeps when he rides horseback, an' it don't make no difference whether ther sun is shinin' down on him hot or not. When he comes ter die I'll bet he'll have slept jest about half of his life away."

"Me no sleepie too muchee; me allee samee velly wakee Chinese, so be."

Hop lighted a cigar as he spoke and puffed away in a contented manner.

The smell of the burning tobacco reminded Charlie that he wanted a smoke, too, so he quickly filled his pipe and lighted it.

Twilight was now upon them, and it would soon be dark.

In that climate the time between daylight and darkness is but a few minutes.

There is no long, lingering period of twilight.

Our friends were talking over the dullness of the two days' trip since they left Tombstone, when suddenly the unmistakable sounds of horses' hoofs came to their ears.

Wild and his partners were on their feet in a twinkling. In that part of the country they were as likely to meet foes as friends, and they always made it a point to be ready.

"Somebody is comin', I reckon," remarked the scout.

"That's right, Charlie," answered our hero, with a nod of the head.

"And we don't know whether they are good or bad," spoke up Dart.

"Well, I don't know as it makes much difference which," the dashing young deadshot remarked. "A little excitement wouldn't be out of place just now."

Nearer came the sounds, and the girls saw to it that their revolvers were got in readiness.

If there was trouble coming they wanted to take a hand, if there was any fighting to be done.

But they knew quite well that unless there were more than six or eight of them, Wild could handle them all right, almost without the assistance of his partners, even.

Nearer came the sounds, and it was easy to tell that there was more than one.

The girls remained in the background, but our hero and his partners stood near some trees, right at the front of the camp.

The next minute a party of five riders came in view. The quick eyes of the three could tell this right away, for it was not so dark that they could not see objects quite plainly.

The campfire had died out, but a lantern rested on the ground near the tents, and Hop sat ready to extinguish it the moment Wild gave the word.

Straight to the camp the horsemen rode, and halting within a few feet of Young Wild West and his partners, one of the riders called out:

"Hello, strangers!"

"Hello!" our hero answered, quickly.

"Oh!" came the exclamation. "I reckon you ain't ther ones we're lookin' fur."

Then the leader of the five dismounted and walked boldly to the camp.

"What is the trouble, my friend?" Wild asked, as he stepped before him.

"You've been follerin' a trail to-day, I reckon," was the reply.

"Yes, that's right. But we don't know those who made it, though. Maybe they are the ones you are looking for."

"I reckon they are, young feller. There's four galoots gone this way what's took somethin' that don't belong ter 'em. We want ter find 'em as soon as we kin, too, 'cause we've got a man here with us what's mighty worried about it."

Wild had sized up the five men pretty well by this time, and he had come to the conclusion that they were all right.

"Well, you can't follow the trail in the dark," he said. "I reckon you had better give it up till morning. When we came here things looked as though those you are after

left here this morning. That makes them just one day ahead of you."

"That's right. That's just about how far they ought ter be ahead of us, if they kept on goin' mighty fast," answered the spokesman of the party.

"Do you think we will be able to catch them, Dick?" asked a man in the party, who was plainly what might be called a tenderfoot, by his manner and style of dress.

"I reckon we'll catch 'em all right, professor," was the reply. "But it's jest as ther young feller says. We can't do nothin' in ther dark. When they find that there ain't no one showin' up they'll go slower, an' it may take us two or three days ter catch 'em. But we'll git 'em, or you needn't pay me an' ther boys fur our trouble. We told yer that in Tombstone, an' we're ther sort of galoots as always keeps our word."

"I believe you. But this is indeed hard luck. After I had everything ready to start out these villains find out what I intended to do, and then steal the chart. It is too bad—too bad!"

"Well, never mind about that. These fellers don't want ter know your troubles. If they don't mind we'll pitch our camp right here, an' stay till daylight. Then we kin light out in a hurry. I'm glad we happened ter see ther light of that lantern they've got here when we was thinkin' of stopping a mile back, even if it didn't prove ter be ther camp of them we're lookin' fur."

"Go ahead and camp here," said Wild, who was now thoroughly satisfied that the five men were all right. "Maybe we might be able to help you catch the men you are after. We are in need of a little excitement just now."

"Say!" spoke up one of the five, suddenly, as he got a good look at the face of our hero. "Ain't you Young Wild West?"

"That's just who I happen to be," Wild retorted, looking keenly at the speaker.

"I thought so. I seen yer once up in Prescott. I thought it was you when I heard yer talk, but I couldn't see well enough ter make yer out. Boys, I reckon we couldn't have fell in with anyone better than Young Wild West. He's ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, an' he kin do things what others can't. I'm mighty glad we've met him."

The horsemen all dismounted now. Four of them were typical cowboys, and the fifth, who had been called "professor," was a tenderfoot.

It did not take long to learn their names. They were Professor Janeway, of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Dick Ball, Morgan, Robley and Injun Pete, cowboys.

Wild told Hop to light another lantern, and then he introduced the strangers to his companions.

Professor Janeway seemed very much pleased at meeting our friends, and he showed he placed great confidence in our hero, for he said:

"I am going to tell you what we are after, Young Wild West. I am searching for an Aztec treasure, which is located in Old Mexico, possibly not more than fifty miles from where we now are. Though I never had the pleasure of meeting you before, I have heard much about

you, and I now ask you to help me in obtaining the treasure. Will you do it?"

"I reckon I will," was the quick reply. "As I just said, we are looking for excitement, and hunting for an Aztec treasure ought to make plenty of it, especially when four scoundrels are in the game. You can count on us, professor."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHART IS RECOVERED.

Professor Janeway was so delighted that he seized both our hero's hands and shook them warmly.

"I am sure I will be pleased to have you go with me in search of the Aztec treasure," he exclaimed. "I hired Dick Ball and his three friends in Tombstone; but that won't interfere with them in the least. They will not object, either, I know."

"Of course we won't object, professor," spoke up Dick Ball. "I reckon we know enough about Young Wild West an' his pards ter feel as though it would be better ter be with 'em. They does things, when they makes up their minds ter. Go with us? Well, I should reckon!"

Morgan, Robley and Injun Pete quickly joined in with him, and then our friends knew there was nothing in the way of a dissent.

To say that the girls were interested would be putting it rather mild, for they liked adventure almost as well as their daring escorts, and there was always something about a hidden treasure that made them feel a sort of charm.

Professor Janeway wanted to tell them all he knew about the Aztec treasure, and what had induced him to start in search of it.

The story was quite a long one, but briefly summed up, was as follows:

The professor had been in charge of some naturalists who were making a tour of New Mexico for the benefit of a museum in the East, and owing to a disagreement with them, he had severed his connection with the society, and had gone on to Tombstone alone.

The day after he arrived there he had come in contact with an old Indian, who had shown him a piece of solid gold that appeared to have been part of the handle of a pitcher.

The professor was astonished when he examined it, and when he found that he had a similar piece of gold in the small collection of curiosities he had with him that fitted to the piece belonging to the Indian with such exactness that there could be no doubt but that the two had been in one piece, he proceeded to question the Indian, who was as much surprised as he was.

The result was that he got much information from him, and after he had made him several little presents, in the course of a few days, he was shown a rough chart that was drawn on parchment, which had an arrowhead upon it, and which, so the old Indian declared, was the spot where an immense treasure of gold and silver lay buried.

This was in a little valley in Old Mexico, but a little

more than three days' travel from Tombstone, and was in a little valley where the ruins of an Aztec village were buried beneath the soil, with here and there a bit of ancient architecture showing itself above the ground.

The parchment chart appeared to be genuine, so the professor asked the Indian why he had not gone to the place to unearth the treasure. The reply he received was that no Indian dared visit the spot, for fear of dying in a very mysterious manner. Many had gone there, but none had ever come back.

The Indian refused to give the professor the chart, or to sell it for any price, but he was induced to allow a copy to be made from it.

Professor Janeway first traced it, and then he drew it out fully, and then he was satisfied.

But the very next day the old Indian was found dead, he having no doubt been murdered by someone of his own race, who had learned that he had given the secret away.

This did not stop the professor from starting on the search, however, though he felt that it might be that someone else might either start on the same errand, or try and prevent him from going.

But the fact that the two pieces of gold fitted together, and that the other part of the vessel that the pieces had come from were supposed to be in the ruins of the Aztec village, spurred him on.

He inquired at the hotel he was stopping at for three or four good men, who would be willing to guide him over some of the wild territory along the Mexican border, representing himself to be a professor in search of old relics, and the result was that Dick Ball, the cowboy, was recommended to him.

Ball was an honest fellow, and it happened that he and three other cowboys had just quit the ranch they had been working on, because the boss had failed to pay them.

They were all ready and willing to go with the tenderfoot professor, when he offered them more wages than they had been receiving.

With the copy of the parchment chart in a small leather case, the professor got ready to set out, leaving it to his hired men to get the necessary supplies.

He had ample money to do all this, and he paid the men a week's wages in advance.

But the night before they were ready to start the leather case containing the chart was stolen, and it was not until morning came that the professor discovered it.

Then it was that he took the four cowboys in his confidence, telling them all about it, and urging them to find the thief.

Being well acquainted in the town, it did not take Dick Ball long to find out that four men of evil repute had left suddenly the night before.

He got a description of them, and that was sufficient to make them take the trail.

The result was that they came upon the camp of our friends, as has been described.

"It is too bad you didn't make an extra copy of the chart, professor," said Wild, when the story had been told.

"Well, I can almost do that from memory," was the

reply. "But I suppose I would make a mistake. There was a description of the place, and just how to get there, and I have that all in my mind now. So have my men, for I have told them several times about it. I would like to get the stolen paper back, so the villains could not get to the place. I want to find this treasure—for I firmly believe it is there—and surprise the people engaged in making searches for ancient ruins. Of course the value of it spurs me on as much as anything else; but I am rich, and do not need money so much. Since I have undertaken this task, I would like to go through to the end."

"Well, I reckon we'll catch ther galoots all right," remarked Cheyenne Charlie. "We'll catch 'em, an' we'll git that map, or whatever it is, from 'em, too. See if we don't! It'll be afore to-morrer night, too."

"That's right, Charlie," Wild nodded. "You, Jim and I will go ahead to-morrow, and we will see if we can't overtake them before sundown. I reckon we'll do it all right."

The professor was much encouraged when he heard this.

"If you only can do it," he said. "I should not like to have the bad men shot, for I don't believe in taking the life of any man. If you can recover the paper please let them go, with a warning to be careful how they act in the future."

"All right," said Wild. "We will do just as you say, professor."

"But if they happen ter put up a fight they might git their medicine," spoke up the scout, who believed in riding the world of all such villains as soon as they showed a disposition to do any killing.

Our friends sat up rather late that night, for Professor Janeway had so much to tell them that they overlooked the fact that the time was passing quickly.

The usual watch was kept, and as they had plenty of assistance now, it did not come hard upon Wild and his partners.

The next morning Wild was up as the light began to show in the east.

He aroused the cook and bade him hurry and get breakfast ready.

Then Charlie and Jim were not long in getting up.

It happened that Hop and Dick Ball had been doing the last two hours' watch, and as soon as he found that his brother was up, the clever Chinaman crept into the tent and fell asleep.

"Ball," said Wild to the cowboy, "the three of us will ride on as soon as we eat breakfast. We will ride hard for we have got the horses to stand it. I reckon we ought to catch up with the four galoots by nightfall, anyhow. The rest of you can come on as fast as you can, and be sure to bring all the water you can carry. We have quite a strip of desert to cross, where nothing grows but cactus, and the sand is hot enough at midday to cook an egg. We have been this way before, and we know something about the lay of the land."

"That's right," answered Ball, nodding his head. "I've been down here once or twice myself. I think I know jest about where ther place is that ther professor is lookin'

fur. There's one of ther nicest little valleys you ever seen after yer git over ther desert strip. I was there once, but I never thought about there being' a treasure there."

"Well, there are lots of places where treasures could be found, if we only knew where to look for them. I believe that what the professor got from the redskin is true, and that there is a treasure there. If there is, you can bet that we'll find it."

"I hope yer do. Ther professor says as haw he'll divide up even with us, after takin' a third himself. He's a putty good sort of a man, he is. Smart as a steel trap, I reckon."

"Oh! sure he is. He is very clever in his line, no doubt."

Just as the breakfast was ready to eat Arietta came out of her sleeping quarters.

"Wild," said she, "are you pretty near ready to start?"

"Yes," was the reply. "But what are you doing up so early, Et?"

"I am going with you."

"Oh! that is it, eh? Well, I suppose you will have to go, if you want to."

"I do want to. I want to help you get possession of the paper that is of so much value to the professor."

"Well, all right. Mr. Ball will see to it that a big canteen is filled with water for you, and Wing will hurry and pack up enough grub for us, I reckon."

The cowboy nodded, though he seemed surprised that the girl wanted to go.

It was not long that they were eating breakfast.

The sun was not up yet when they mounted, ready to set out on the trail.

None of the rest of the camp's occupants were awake yet, and our hero did not think it necessary to arouse them.

"That's a mighty fine horse you've got there, Wild," observed Dick Ball, as he looked at the sorrel stallion our hero had mounted, and nodded approvingly.

"Yes," was the rejoinder. "I never yet saw the match of Spitfire, either for speed, endurance or intelligence. But we have all got the best horses that money can buy. I didn't have to buy mine, though. One of the best horse-men in the West caught him from a wild herd when he was not more than three years old. He could not do a thing with him, and after he had killed a man, and broken the limbs of two or three others, in their attempts to ride him, I happened along. The man told me the sorrel was mine if I could ride him. I broke him in about fifteen minutes, and here he is."

"An' here's ther man what catched him," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, showing that he was more proud than otherwise. "That was when I first got acquainted with Young Wild West, an' I was ther one what first named him ther Prince of ther Saddle. Whoopee! Wow—wow! There ain't a man or boy in ther whole world what kin manage a horse like Young Wild West."

The shout of the scout brought the rest out of their sleep in a jiffy.

But they were only in time to see the four ride away.

Wild and his partners and Arietta struck out at a gallop, and the ground was covered rapidly.

They continued on until noon, only stopping long enough two or three times to give the horses a breathing spell.

When they halted to eat the noonday meal they were at the edge of the desert.

Trees and other vegetation no longer sheltered them from the sun, so they had to make the best of it by getting beneath some overhanging rocks.

The trail had been plain all the way, so there had been no delay about it.

After a rest of half an hour they again set out.

Arietta stood the strain as only a girl of her experience could, and along toward sunset she was the first one to spy four horsemen and a loaded mule a mile ahead of them.

She just had time to call the attention of the rest before they disappeared from view around a cliff.

Then it was that they rode forward at a stiff gallop, and in a few minutes they came upon the villains, who were taken completely by surprise, since the sand made it possible for the horses to approach almost noiselessly.

"Hold up your hands!" commanded Young Wild West, and before they knew it the four villains found they were covered.

"What do yer want?" asked the leader of the quartet, as he obeyed the command.

"I want that paper you stole from Professor Janeway in Tombstone, and I want it quick!" Wild answered in his cool and easy way. "If you want to live you'll hand it over."

The leader looked at his three companions, who were pale with fear, and then he drew from his pocket a small leather case.

"There it is," he said, tossing it to Arietta, who rode forward to receive it. "It's jest as it was when I took it. We've read it, of course; there ain't no use in sayin' we ain't."

The girl looked at it, and then gave a nod of satisfaction.

"It is all right, Wild," she said. "You may as well let them go, since we have got what we came after."

"All right, Et. Now we'll see how fast they can get out of sight. Light out, you sneaking coyotes."

The four villains did not need to be told twice. Away they went, and soon they were out of sight behind a big pile of rocks.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUR VILLAINS BEHOLD A STARTLING SIGHT.

The four villains had kept right on going after their meeting with Young Wild West, and they did not stop until they reached a spot where the rocks were so plentiful that it was impossible for them to be seen.

The sun was nearly down to the line of the western horizon now, and they knew if they expected to find water

they must keep right on and get as far as possible before it grew dark.

But it so happened that they had been that way once before, and they knew where there was a water hole.

They had spent four or five years in the neighborhood of the Mexican border, and their business had been stealing what they could get their hands on from unsuspecting travelers and prospectors.

But since they had got possession of the document which told where the treasure lay, they had but one thought, and that was to get to the place as soon as possible and find whether or not the treasure was there.

According to the chart they must be within ten or fifteen miles of the place now.

Just before our friends surprised them one of them had been sure that he saw the two high peaks that were supposed to partly mark the spot where the treasure was hidden.

But what followed after their brief interview with Young Wild West had caused them to forget all about this, and now as they came to a halt one of them, who was the leader, brought the subject up.

Skinny," said he, "you're quite sartin you seen them two peaks, are yer?"

"Yes," was the reply of the man, who was very rightly named Skinny, because there was little or no flesh upon him, and his face looked cadaverous. "I am certain I did see 'em. But it's funny we can't see 'em now, unless somethin' got between us an' ther peaks."

"Well, I reckon that's happened all right," spoke up another of the four, who bore the name of Foolish Mack. "We come through that cut mighty fast, I reckon, an' there was quite some distance ter it. Of course somethin' has got in ther way, so we can't see 'em."

"Well, I s'pose that must be it," said the leader, nodding his head. "Maybe we won't find ther place to-night; but we'll mighty quick know in ther mornin'. Of course I mean if them that's followin' us don't git so far by that time. It was a mighty cute trick of me to give 'em the wrong chart, wasn't it? But I tell yer, boys, when a galoot gets the best of Bill Larimer he's got to be gettin' up early in ther mornin'. I felt pretty sartin that somebody might come around an' want that chart we stole from that professor galoot, and that's why I jest drawed another one, which ain't no chart at all; only a make-believe place what'll make fools out of them galoots if they try ter find it. That boy thought he was mighty smart when I give 'em ther paper, an' he 'peared to sort of feel sorry fer us. That's why he let us go, an' it was mighty easy for us to promise that we would never try to bother 'em. Oh! I'm a mighty smart galoot, if I do say so myself."

Skinny and Foolish Mack nodded to show that they were in strict accord with what he said.

The fourth individual, who possessed but one eye, and was called One Eye George, grunted, and his face, which was really hideous and almost expressionless at times, now took on an aspect that might have frightened a child or a timid person.

But the man could not help how he looked, though it

must be said that he was about as bad as the appearance of his countenance indicated.

"Sartinly a mighty smart galoot, Bill," he observed, with a chuckle. "I never thought yer was goin' ter have any use fer that make-believe map yer drawed up. But now I kin see."

"A galoot what's only got one eye ain't expected ter see as much as one what's got two," observed Skinny, as he gave Bill Larimer a nudge with his elbow. "But that's all right; don't go to gittin' mad 'cause I'm remarkin' about what happened in ther whisky mill over in Yuma last year. You're one of ther best pards I ever traveled with, an' there ain't no mistake about that."

"You're all good fellers, boys," remarked the leader. "There is no use talkin' about that. We know each other, an' we've been through ther mill together. But the thing we have got ter do now is ter find where this Aztec treasure is what that professor was so sure of findin'. We'll keep right on goin' till we find that water hole. I know it can't be more than five miles, anyhow, an' right straight ahead, at that. Come on, boys. Maybe that professor will find out the chart ain't ther right one when he gits hold of it, and then there will be some fun among that gang. They'll want ter git us mighty quick. But we ain't goin' ter leave no trail now, 'cause when ther wind comes up, which it always does when ther sun goes down, the hoofmarks of our nags will fill up with sand, an' they won't have nothin' ter foller."

The four men started their horses at a canter and rode along, keeping close to the foot of the cliff that wound along in a zig-zag fashion on their right.

The sun kept sinking lower and lower, and in a few minutes it was almost below the range that loomed up in the distance.

Bill Larimer shrugged his shoulders and showed signs of uneasiness when perhaps three miles had been covered.

"What's ther matter, Bill?" asked Skinny, as he turned his sunken eyes upon the man he called his leader. "Do yer think we've made a mistake about ther water hole?"

"No," was the reply. "I'm sartin' we're goin' right. Yer all know that we was down this way afore about two mths ago. Don't yer remember how we nabbed them two prospectors an' took all they had, leavin' 'em to foot it away from here ther best they could? Well, ther place where we done that is right over there to ther left, ther other side of that little ridge. That I am sartin of, an' I reckon if you fellers take a good look, you'll say ther same thing."

The three men looked in the direction indicated, and the result was a simultaneous nod from them.

"Yes," exclaimed Foolish Mack, "that's right, Bill. Ther water hole ain't more 'an a mile around ther cliff over there. I know I'm right now. Sometimes landscapes change in these here parts. It may be that this here one has changed a little; but not enough ter fool me. You're right, Bill."

All four of them now seemed to feel certain that they were on the right track.

They forced their horses ahead at a fast gait.

Skinny was leading the pack-mule with a taut rope,

and the animal was not inclined to proceed any faster than its usual gait.

On they went, covering the ground rapidly, and it was not long before other landmarks that were familiar to them came in sight.

Five minutes later they reached the water hole and found that there was plenty of water there.

Both men and horses were thirsty, and though the water tasted a little brackish, they drank of it greedily.

By this time the sun had entirely disappeared, and it was growing dark.

"There ain't no better place to stop than right here, I reckon," said the leader, as he looked around at the queer shaped rocks that arose on all sides, some of them almost looking to be the ruins of buildings, and in some cases, representing animals of a previous age.

"I reckon we can't better ourselves any," answered One Eye George. "Even if we have ter fight, it's better ter do it where there's water ter drink. If we do have ter fight we've got a regular little fort here. Look at them rocks! I'd like ter see as many as twenty galoots drive us out of here, let alone a man an' a couple of boys an' a girl. I don't count ther professor as anything in this game. He's nothin' but a tenderfoot, an' he's been educated so much that most likely he's afraid ter shoot off a gun. Oh! I took a good look at that galoot in Tombstone, and I heard him talk enough ter satisfy me that he couldn't fight fast enough ter keep himself warm on a hot day."

"Well, all we seen was a man, two boys an' a gal. It might have been that there was more further back with ther professor," Bill Larimer answered, as he unbuckled the girths and removed the saddle from his horse.

"We'll have ter take our chances on it, that's all," Skinny said, as he followed the example of the leader.

The other two were not long in taking the saddles from their horses, too, and though there was nothing in the way of grass for them to nibble, the tired animals seemed to be much relieved.

Probably they thought they were going to have a rest, even if they had no feed that night.

But the horses ridden in that region were quite used to going without anything to eat for hours at a time, and as they had filled themselves with sufficient mesquite shortly before striking the desert that morning, there was really no danger of them starving for a while.

The bags containing the provisions the villains had brought with them were opened and they sat down to a quiet repast, eating heartily of what they had, and not seeming to think it might be a long while before they would be able to replenish their supply.

But according to the writing on the chart they had stolen from the professor, the valley where the treasure was supposed to be hidden contained fruits, as well as game and pasture for their horses; and as they must surely reach it in less than half a day, if there was no mistake about it, it probably made them careless in this respect.

They sat down behind a big rock and talked over the situation, smoking their pipes, and as the minutes went

by they began to think that they were not to be bothered that night, anyhow.

But they did not dare to light the lantern they had with them, for fear that it might be seen by those they had encountered a short time before sunset.

About an hour after darkness set in the four men were startled by suddenly seeing a sulphurous light flashing along the foot of the cliff.

They sprang to their feet, and just then the clatter of hoofs sounded.

The next moment a horse and rider dashed past them.

It disappeared from sight behind a big rock in a twinkling, but in the brief interval the four villains saw something that caused a feeling of horror to come over them.

If their eyes had not deceived them, the rider of the horse was without a head, for the glaring torch he had held in his right hand threw its light fully upon his form, and there was no head to be seen.

In fact Bill Larimer would have taken an affidavit right then and there that the rider was holding a skull at arms' length, and it was this the sulphurous glare came from, instead of a torch.

The apparition, or whatever it might have been called, disappeared as quickly as it came, and the four men were left to argue it out among themselves as to what they had seen.

For the space of fully half a minute neither of them spoke a word. They sat as if rooted to the spot.

Not a sound could be heard, but this was probably due to the fact that the horse was galloping away over the yielding sand.

The light, too, had disappeared as quickly as it came, so there was really nothing to give them any further information or ideas concerning the startling occurrence.

One Eye George was the first to recover himself.

"What in thunder was that, Bill?" he asked, taking the leader by the arm, and shaking it as though he thought the owner might be asleep, or that he might be dreaming himself.

"I don't know, George," was the reply, in a faltering tone of voice. "Did you see it?"

"I seen a galoot without a head, an' he rode by like a streak of greased lightnin'. Is that right?"

"That's right, George. That's just what I seen. The galoot didn't have no head on his shoulders, but he was holdin' a head that was all afire in his hand."

"I reckon it must have been a ghost," Foolish Mack spoke up. "I've heard tell of such things. My grandmother used to tell us how her father was ridin' along on horseback one night, when all of a sudden a horseman came along right aside of him. He could hear the hoofs of ther horse as they struck the hard road, but when he looked at the horse and rider they seemed sorter strange lookin'. He could see plum through ther rider, so she said, an' when he got so as he could speak he asked him who he was; but nary a reply did he git. That must have happened somewhere nigh a hundred years ago, but my grandmother always said as how it was a fact. What we jest seen now is somethin' like that, and yer kin bet that galoot was a ghost."

Skinny trembled slightly as this explanation was made; but nerving himself, he ventured to say:

"Don't yer think we had better git away from here, boys? If this place is haunted, I don't want nothin' ter do with it. Ther Aztec treasure may be all right, and I'd like ter have my share of it, but blamed if I want any dealings with any ghosts."

"Don't git chicken-hearted," said Bill Larimer, affecting to be unconcerned. "It was not a ghost we seen. It was somebody tryin' ter play a trick on us. Maybe someone else got wind of this here treasure, an' they have got ahead of us, an' are tryin' ter scare us away. Yer know that ther old Injun what told ther professor all about this game got killed ther next day after he told him. He was murdered no doubt, an'——"

Just then a fiendish laugh sounded near them, and then the headless horseman dashed by them again, going in the direction he had first appeared from.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR FRIENDS GET TO THE FERTILE VALLEY.

There was but one thing for Young Wild West and his three companions to do after they had secured the chart, and that was to turn back and meet the rest of the party.

It was not likely that they would travel after it grew dark, but Wild thought they might, since they had reached the desert before this, and one place was as good as another to stop at.

"I reckon we'll ride along a little slow until we meet them," the young deadshot remarked, when the four villains had disappeared into a narrow cut. "But we may as well have something to eat before we go. Jim, just get out the grub."

"All right, Wild," Dart replied, and he lost no time doing so.

The tired horses were given what water could be spared, and then the four made a fairly good meal of the eatables the cook had packed in a bag before they set out that morning.

They all looked at the chart, of course, and they none once thought that it was anything but the right one.

It had been dark almost half an hour when they set out over the back trail.

There was no danger of losing their way, for the horses would go right, since they had the instinct that would enable them to follow the way they had come, even if they could not see the hoofprints.

"I reckon we'll let the horses choose their own gait," said our hero. "If they feel like making a sprint now and then we'll let them do it, and if they want to walk they can do that."

"That is the best way," Arietta answered. "But I think Spitfire will keep right on going, for he seems anxious to cover the ground pretty fast."

"Well, he wants to get back to some place where he can find grass to eat. That is only natural, I suppose. But I reckon he won't do it, not to-night, anyhow. Hop and Wing will bring along some mesquite and grass, most

likely, and then our horses can have something to eat. The next time they get a chance to fill in will be when we reach this valley the professor is so anxious to find. We ought to strike it by noon to-morrow, according to what he said."

"I don't understand the chart at all, Wild," and Arietta shook her golden head. "I can't understand how the professor could figure it out the way he talks."

"Well, that is all right. He made a tracing from the original, and so he must understand it thoroughly. We will wait till we get to him, and then he will explain."

They kept on riding for an hour, and then, much to their satisfaction, they heard somebody coming.

That the rest of the party were approaching they felt pretty certain of, though they knew that it was best to be a little cautious.

Wild motioned for them to halt, and they did so.

Then it was that a shrill, piping voice called out:

"Hip hi! Me allee samee Hop Wah; comee ffrom China!"

It was Hop.

"That's all right, Hop," Wild answered. "Come right along. We have come to meet you."

"Hooray!" went up from more than one throat, and our friends knew the cowboys were making themselves heard.

A minute later they met those who had been following the trail.

"Oh, Arietta!" cried the scout's wife. "We were so much afraid that you might run into danger. How did you make out?"

"Fine," replied Arietta. "I have the paper the professor was so anxious to get. We overtook the villains just before sunset, and it was not a bit of trouble we had in making the leader hand over the paper. He knew that he ran the risk of losing his life if he refused, so he just handed it over. Then Wild made them ride away as though their lives depended on it. There was no bloodshed, for the villains did not offer to put up a fight."

"Great! Great!" exclaimed Professor Janeway, fairly shaking with the joy he felt, as he dismounted. "I hardly believed you would succeed."

"I made no mistake in ther gang, then?" queried Dick, the cowboy. "So there was four of 'em? Well, I was sartin of my men. I didn't make no mistake about it. I'm mighty glad of that."

"Take it easy, everybody," said Wild. "Have you had supper yet?"

"Yes, we halted half an hour before sunset," Anna answered. "Have you had anything to eat lately?"

"Oh, yes! We were not going without that, you can bet. After we got what we wanted we about finished up the grub Wing put up for us. It was a cold supper, but it tasted pretty good, just the same. We were rather hungry, you know."

Then our hero called Hop and told him to light a lantern.

As he had said, it was just as good to camp in one place as another, since there was nothing but sand and rocks, anyhow, and when the lantern showed them their surroundings, he nodded and said:

"Go ahead and put up the tents. I reckon this isn't

quite as nice a place as where we stayed last night; but it is about the best we can get, so let it go at that."

The two Chinamen, heartily glad that the day's journey was at an end, lost no time in getting at their work.

Then Wild found that quite a considerable amount of fodder had been brought along for the horses, and he saw to it that the sorrel stallion and the other horses were provided for right away.

Not until this was done did he tell Arietta to produce the leather case.

The professor was feverish with excitement, but he had refrained from asking to see the paper, as he knew Wild would surely show it when he got ready.

Wing brought a lantern for them, and as Arietta handed the case to him, the professor gave an exclamation of joy.

The next moment he had opened it and had the folded sheet of paper in his hand.

In his eagerness to unfold it he almost tore the paper, and when he had spread it out his eyes dilated and his face turned as pale as death.

"This—is—not—the paper!" he articulated in a choking voice. "Oh, the villains! They deceived you, Young Wild West. They gave you a chart that is not the right one."

Wild was astonished when he heard this, while Arietta looked dismayed.

"What do you mean, professor?" the boy asked, as he quickly recovered his composure. "Do you mean to say that this is not the copy you made of the chart?"

"It certainly is not," and the man let the paper slip from his hands and staggered back against a rock.

Our hero picked up the paper.

"Well, if that is the case, we will have to get the right one, that's all," he said, coolly. "Just take it easy. The galoots certainly fooled us. But wait! We will make it right. I promise you that I will get the right article before we are a day older."

The professor was grieved as well as surprised at having received the wrong paper, but he brightened up a little when the young deadshot expressed himself so strongly.

"You think you will be able to catch them again?" he asked.

"Certainly. The very fact that they fooled us by giving us the wrong paper makes it sure. They will go on looking for the treasure, and that means that they won't go very far. If they don't happen to find it right away they will hang around. Then we'll get them. I reckon I'll make the galoots jump for playing that trick on us!" "You kin bet your life on that, professor!" Cheyenne Charlie spoke up.

When he came to look over the chart closely Wild could see that it amounted to virtually nothing.

Still it was rather cleverly drawn, and there was an arrowhead at a certain spot.

But there were no directions written at the bottom, and this omission was noticed by the professor the moment he laid eyes upon the paper.

"I reckon I'll keep that, professor," said Wild, as he took the paper and put it in his pocket. "I want to meet the galoot who passed it over to us, and then make him

hand over the right one in exchange for it. I'll do it, too, as I said before. I was never more earnest about a thing in my life before. I don't like to be fooled, you know. I am not in the habit of being caught that way, and it grinds me to think of it."

"I think I understand your feelings pretty well, Wild," answered the learned man, nodding. "If you can only get the right paper for me I am sure we will find the treasure. That means that you will be well paid for what you have done for me, as I mean that the treasure shall be divided equally between us all. I don't need money; it is notoriety I am looking for. I may as well say that, for it is the truth. I will gain some honor if I happen to be the one to make such a discovery, and those I parted company with will have something to talk about. I could not agree with them very well, and that is why I left them. I was delighted when I got acquainted with the old Indian, and when I had made a copy of the parchment chart he had I had in mind to make a discovery that would startle the world. I have not given it up yet, for I have the utmost confidence in you, boy as you are."

"Never mind about the boy part of it, professor," spoke up the scout. "Wild kin do a great deal more than any men what I have seen. You jest leave it ter him. He'll do what he says, an' don't yer forgit it."

"I know he will, Charlie."

The professor had been advised to call our friends by their nicknames, and he seemed pleased at doing so.

The night passed without anything happening to disturb our friends.

The only sounds to be heard were those they made themselves, and to those not used to being camped on a desert waste it might have been awesome, as the dead silence might have been called ghostly.

Our hero was up when day broke, and it was not long before he had the cook up and at work in preparing a hurried breakfast.

Wild was anxious to get to the place where the four villains had gone, for he now meant that they should not have any of the treasure, if it was really to be found.

What they had done made them lose all claim upon it, in his way of thinking.

Professor Janeway had obtained his information in regard to the treasure in an honest way, and the four men had stolen it from him.

Then to make matters worse, they had substituted a false chart for the real one.

Young Wild West was certainly determined to get the right chart, and it would go hard with the four men if they put up a fight when he found them.

The sun was not up when our friends mounted their horses.

A breeze had sprung up during the night and the trail through the sand was almost obliterated.

But Wild and his partners knew the way, and about half an hour before noon they rode down into the fertile valley that the professor had declared to exist there.

It was with a feeling of relief that they came to a halt in a pleasant little grove, where the grass was plentiful and a brook trickled down a mossy bank.

The tired horses whinnied with delight when they

found they were to be turned out, so they might help themselves to both fodder and water.

"Now then," said our hero, turning to the professor, "I reckon we are in the valley the chart showed; the next thing is to find the treasure."

"And the villains who stole the chart, and then deceived you by giving you a false one," added the professor.

"Oh, that will come in while we are doing the rest. Don't think I have given up the idea of possessing the right chart. I am going to get that, even if we should find the treasure without it. I want to make the four galoots realize that they made the mistake of their lives when they played that trick on us."

"Me allee samee makee lillee fire to gittee um dinner leady, Misler Wild?" asked Wing, when the pack-horses had been unloaded.

"Yes," was the reply. "I reckon we need not be afraid of the four galoots, who must be around here somewhere. Go ahead and get us up a good meal. We can enjoy it, I think. While it is being made ready Charlie and I will take a little scout around and see if we can find where the villains are."

This just suited the scout, and he promptly picked up his rifle, which he had leaned against a tree.

"Be careful, Wild," said Arietta, as the two left the camp. "You have pretty tricky men to deal with, you know."

"That's all right, Et," was the reply. "I reckon we can take care of ourselves."

They started around in a circle, keeping under cover of the trees and bushes as much as possible.

Knowing that the smoke from the fire would probably be seen by the four men, if they were anywhere near by, they hoped to catch them stealing toward it.

Wild and Charlie had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards from the camp when they came to a spot that looked very much like the ruins of an ancient village.

Rocks that had been cut and squared by the hand of man showed here and there, and in one place something that looked very much like the cornice of a stone dwelling showed itself above the ground.

Toward this they made their way, and just as they halted before it something entirely unexpected by them happened.

The ground suddenly gave way beneath their feet, and down went Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie before they had a chance to save themselves!

CHAPTER V.

WILD AND CHARLIE IN A BAD BOX.

It was not the first time that Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie had taken sudden drops, but it was only natural that they should feel that death was very near when they went shooting down through the darkness.

Bump!

Cheyenne Charlie's foot struck the ground when he had dropped probably twelve feet.

He made an effort to regain his feet, but it was a vain one.

It seemed as though he had struck upon a slippery hill, and down he went, sliding as though he was upon ice.

Wild was right after him, and apparently neither of them were seriously hurt as they landed upon the slanting surface.

Down they went, and if the place had been lighted it might have looked as though they were racing to see who would reach the bottom first.

But what was at the bottom? That was the question.

But the moment he felt himself sliding, and no longer falling, our hero's spirits arose considerably.

He had been in underground places before, and as he had always got out of them safe and sound, there was no doubt in his mind that he would get out of this one.

But the slide did not last long.

While it seemed much longer, it was all over in less than ten seconds, for then they landed in a heap of dust at the bottom of the descent.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout, as he got himself in a sitting posture. "What do yer think of that? Blamed if we wasn't goin' down there putty fast."

Before Wild could answer him the scout was taken with a fit of sneezing, for the dust seemed to have a very pungent odor; and the first thing Wild knew, he was in the same state.

But their handkerchiefs were quickly brought into use, and holding them over their nostrils, they crawled further back from the place they had landed in such an impromptu manner—and then much to their satisfaction and relief, they felt a draught of cool air blow upon them.

"It's all right, Charlie, I reckon," said Wild. "Where there's a draught of air it shows plainly that there is at least two places where it can come in. If we can't get out by the way we came in it may be that we can get out at the other entrance. But I don't think it is so very far, so if Jim, or any of the rest, happen to find the hole where we broke through, they won't be long in sending down a rope or coming themselves to look for us."

"That's right, Wild," and then the scout brought out his match-safe, and soon a light was flaring in the underground place.

By the aid of a lighted match the two could see that they were in what appeared to be the cellar of some building, but which really was, beyond a doubt, one of the apartments of an ancient edifice.

The walls on either side of them were perpendicular and smooth, and before the match went out they could see that the ceiling seemed to be as level as though it had just been built.

The apartment must have been fully thirty feet in length, by about fifteen in width.

It was into another apartment that the two had fallen when they came down the slippery chute.

This was in ruins, but that which they had crawled into in order to escape the stifling dust seemed perfectly intact.

Charlie lighted another match as the first one expired.

Then they both walked back to the place where they had landed. The dust had pretty well settled by this time, and as they crouched and took a look upward they could see the daylight, but not very distinct, as there must have been a sharp angle right near where they had dropped.

Wild knew that it was hardly likely that they could make themselves heard by shouting where they were, as the place where they had halted at noon was fully two hundred yards from the opening they had made in falling through the surface of the ground.

"Charlie," said he, "I reckon the best thing we can do is to keep quiet just now. There is no telling whether or not we have enemies nearby, and if we should go to calling out they might hear instead of our friends. We will try and see if we can crawl up this slippery place, and if we find we can't we will just hunt around for another place to get out. If we fail in this the chances are that someone will have found the place we dropped through, and then we will get out anyhow. I am quite interested in this underground place, for it may be that it is here that the Aztec treasure will be found."

"Maybe so," answered the scout. "Come on an' we'll see if we kin crawl up that blamed steep place."

The two stepped softly through the dust, and reaching the foot of the incline, started to go up.

We say started, for that was all they did.

They could not go a foot to save themselves, so steep and slippery was the chute-like place.

"I thought so," remarked our hero, as he quickly gave it up and stepped back away from the dust-heap.

"There is no use in wasting our strength in trying to crawl up there. We will just go on through in the direction the draught of air comes from and see what we can find somewhere else."

"All right, Wild," retorted the scout. "But don't yer think it would be a good idea to have some kind of a light?"

"It certainly would, Charlie; but where are we to get one?"

Charlie struck another match and looked around among the dust and dirt that lay in a heap at the foot of the chute, and then it was that he gave an exclamation of delight.

Several pieces of half-rotten wood were to be seen sticking through here and there.

They were pieces from the limbs of a tree, and how they got there neither of the two knew; nor did they care just then, for both felt that one of them might answer the purpose of a torch, if it was dry enough to burn.

Charlie lost no time in getting out a piece that suited his fancy, and then he applied the flame from the match to the end of it.

Wild was surprised to see how readily the stick took fire.

In less than a minute the stick was blazing away, as though it was possessed of something of a resinous nature, and holding it before him, the scout led the way through the apartment they had examined before coming back to the mouth of the chute.

The draught of air was coming right toward them,

which showed that the opening they had made when they fell through had given a vent that formed a suction.

There was an arched doorway at the other end of the chamber, and through this they went fearlessly, the air keeping the stick blazing away nicely.

Instead of entering another apartment they found themselves in a narrow passage, which appeared to be partly the work of man and partly the work of nature.

It did not run in anything like a straight line, neither was it of the same slope. But it was amply large enough for a man on horseback to ride through without any discomfort.

On went the two, and when they had covered possibly two hundred feet they suddenly emerged into a broad chamber that was partly filled with blocks of stone, broken columns and a mass of masonry.

At one end the remains of what had once been an altar could be seen, and the moment the eyes of our hero lighted upon it, he exclaimed:

"If this is not all that is left of an Aztec temple, my name is not Young Wild West! According to what the professor said the treasure of gold and silver was buried in the ruins of an Aztec temple. Now then, here is the temple, and the next thing to find is the treasure."

Before Cheyenne Charlie could make a reply a hollow, mocking laugh sounded somewhere within the underground place.

"The treasure was here," said a voice, "but it was taken away this morning. Young Wild West, you are very clever at following trails, I have heard. Let us see if you can follow the trail of the treasure. Ha, ha, ha!"

If our two friends had been out in the open air they could have located the direction the voice came from at once, but down in that underground place, where sounds came to their ears suddenly, and echoes blended with echoes, it was impossible to do it.

The two stood stock still in their tracks and waited for the voice to sound again, hoping that they might be able to locate it then.

But they were disappointed.

Whoever it was that had laughed and spoken to them had either left the place, or had decided to remain silent.

When five minutes had elapsed our hero said, speaking in a whisper:

Charlie, have you any idea where that voice came from—in what direction, I mean?"

"I couldn't tell yer, not ter save my life," the scout answered, shrugging his shoulders. "This here seems ter be a sorter mystery, Wild."

"Well, there is one thing certain, and that is that it was not one of the four villains we took the paper from who spoke. I am certain of that; neither of them spoke in as correct a manner. You can depend upon it that others have been here in search of the treasure, and according to what that fellow said just now, they have been successful. Come right down to it, they have just as much right to it as we have, and unless they try to bother us we should let them alone."

"I reckon ther professor will feel mighty sore when he hears about this," Charlie answered. "But let's see if we kin git out of here."

Near the ruins of the altar there was an opening, but

it did not seem to either of them that the voice had come from that direction.

However, they were not bent so much on finding out where the voice came from as they were upon getting out of the buried temple, as Wild called it.

The dry branch still burned, though every minute or two the scout was forced to wave it through the air to keep the flame alive.

Young Wild West had drawn one of his revolvers when the mocking laugh sounded, and still holding it in his hand, ready for instant use, he led the way for the opening.

Pausing a moment when he saw that there was a crook in the passage that ran through the earth and rock before him, and that it was as dark as a pocket, he touched the scout on the arm and said:

"We will go through, Charlie, and you can bet that we will land somewhere. Come on!"

"Right yer are, Wild," the scout answered, for he was always ready to go where the dashing young deadshot went, no matter where it might be, or what the danger was.

The two had not gone more than a hundred feet through the passage when they heard the clatter of steel-shod hoofs not far ahead of them, and, if they were not mistaken, in the very passage they had started to go through.

The scout gave a nod as he looked at the dashing young deadshot, and said in a whisper:

"I reckon there goes that galoot what laughed and told us ther treasure was gone, eh, Wild?"

"I reckon so," was the reply. "Well, if he can go through here with a horse I am pretty certain that we can go through on foot. Come on! Let's run a little. Maybe we can catch a glimpse of him before he gets out."

The two now ran lightly through the passage, the burning torch lighting the way sufficiently for them to escape striking the jagged points of rock that projected from either side.

Suddenly as they rounded a sharp turn in the passage they saw a light ahead of them.

That it came from a lantern they both knew quite well, and just as it disappeared from their view they got a glimpse of a horseman riding away at a sharp trot.

"There he goes, sure enough! We will run a little faster."

It was hardly necessary to tell the scout to come on.

He was just as anxious as our hero to see more of the stranger, and he let his long legs go for all they were worth.

But Wild led him easily, for he could outrun the scout without putting himself to his best.

A hundred yards further on and the light of day suddenly showed before them.

They were just in time to see the horse and rider ascend an incline, and then both were lost to view.

The flame from the burning stick went out just then, and when he tried to fan it so it would burn again, and failed, the scout threw it to the ground with an exclamation of disgust.

"That's all right, Charlie," said Wild. "I reckon we

don't need that any more now. There's daylight right ahead."

Charlie had stopped running when the burning stick became extinguished, and Wild had done the same thing, as he did not know why the scout had stopped until he saw him trying to fan the burning brand back to life.

The two now pushed forward again, and were soon ascending a long incline, the passage being very straight just there.

As they neared the mouth of the passage a voice suddenly called out:

"Come on, Young Wild West! I am waiting to get a shot at you. I never saw you before, but I am sure I will know you from the description that has been given me. Come on, and meet your death! They say you are not afraid to face death, and I am just the one to mete it out to you. Show the kind of material you are made of, Mr. Dashing Young Deadshot! Ha, ha, ha!"

As these words rang out our hero involuntarily came to a halt, and so did the scout.

To run boldly from the passage after hearing that from someone they could not see was but to enter the very jaws of death, for the chances were that they would be shot down before they got even a glimpse of the villain who was waiting for them.

The two were certainly in a bad box.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOUR VILLAINS MEET THE HEADLESS MAN.

Bill Larimer and his three companions actually fell to the ground when they beheld the horrible-looking horseman the second time.

They had a better view of him this time, and they all saw that he was without a head, and that he carried a flaming skull in his right hand.

In the brief interval they also saw that he was attired in a fancy suit of clothes that was only for Mexicans of the higher class.

The glare from the flaming skull had been sufficient to show them all this, and the fact that the man was without a head racked upon their nerves to such an extent that at that moment they were utterly helpless.

For fully five minutes they remained prone on the ground.

Then it was that Larimer mustered up sufficient courage to rise to a sitting posture.

"It's gone, boys," he faltered. "Git up. There ain't no use in bein' afraid, I reckon."

But he was in anything but an easy frame of mind as he spoke, though he was one of the kind who are quick to recover themselves.

Foolish Mack lifted his head and saw that the leader of the party was standing on his feet.

Then he slowly arose.

Skinny and One Eye George heard him, and they, too, got upon their feet.

All three looked around, as though they were expecting to see the headless man appear again.

"Keep cool, boys," said Larimer. "That wasn't no ghost. It was jest someone tryin' ter frighten us away from here. We ain't ther only ones what's after ther treasure, as I said before. We'll find out more about this later on. I'll tell yer what we'll do. We'll ride on till we strike some trees an' sich. Then we'll lay down an' have a good sleep. Come on!"

This suited the three, and they lost no time in going to their horses.

In a very few minutes they were mounted and riding away, Larimer leading in the direction they had been heading all day.

The stars shone brightly overhead and the curious-shaped elevations of rock showed up on all sides, some of them looking like grim sentinels of death.

Hardly a word passed between them for the full space of twenty minutes, and the only sounds to be heard were the thuds as the hoofs of their horses struck the powdery white sand.

On they went, the minutes flitting by, and all the while nearing the place where the grass was green and the wild flowers bloomed in profusion.

It happened that the water hole was but a few miles from the edge of the valley, though it could not be seen from that point, owing to the high rocks and small ridges and peaks that intervened.

Not until five miles had been covered did the conversation get well underway.

Heretofore only an occasional exchange of words had taken place, but now they were all in better spirits, and they talked freely.

"Do yer know what I think?" said Larimer. "I've jest about made up my mind that it was one of them what made me give up that chart who scared us, boys. The more I've been thinkin' about it as we rode along, ther more it has struck me that way. Them what knows how could mighty easy rig up a man so he'd 'pear ter be without a head. You kin bet that they're jest tryin' ter scare us away from here, so they won't be interfered with in gittin' ther treasure."

"By ginger!" exclaimed Skinny. "That sounds jest about ther thing, I think. I never thought of anything like that. I'll bet it was ther man with ther long, black hair! We didn't see what they had with 'em, an' he might have had that Mexican rig strapped on behind his saddle. Right yer are, Bill."

Foolish Mack nodded.

"Maybe that's it," he ventured. "But I believe there is sich things as ghosts, jest ther same."

"So do I," declared One Eye George.

"Well, never mind if yer do," Larimer said, testily. "You fellers jest listen ter what I say. I'm sorter runnin' this business, anyhow. Wasn't it me what stole ther paper? An' wasn't it me what fixed up ther one ter fool 'em? You jest do as I say, an' we'll come out of this all right."

"All right, Bill," One Eye George hastened to reply.

"There ain't nothin' better ter do, so we'll have ter," added Foolish Mack. "I always put a lot of faith in yer ever since I knowed yer, Bill, an' I reckon I ain't goin' ag'in what yer say now."

"That's ther way ter talk!" exclaimed Skinny. "Jest

keep thinkin' that way, an' we'll stay on ther right track."

This bit of conversation seemed to straighten up the feelings of all four of them a bit, and in a few minutes they were acting about the same as they had been before the headless horseman appeared.

They rode on and at length they came to the valley.

It so happened that they came to a brook, and that was the signal to dismount and seek the rest they needed.

In spite of what had happened, all four were not long in falling asleep, though Skinny volunteered to keep a watch for two hours.

But he succumbed almost as quickly as the others, and whether it was the change of air and the scent of the wild flowers, or just because they were tired out, they slept soundly until sunrise.

Foolish Mack was the first to awaken, and when he looked around at the green foliage, and drew in a few breaths of the wholesome air, he gave a nod of satisfaction and muttered:

"Ghosts don't show up in daylight, anyhow. It may be that it wasn't a ghost, an' then, ag'in, it may be that it was; but I don't care a blame now!"

He drew a plug of tobacco from a pocket and took a chew, just to steady his nerves.

Then he decided that it was time for his companions to get up.

"Hello, there!" he called out, as he leaned over One Eye George and gave him a shake. "Time ter git up! Change cars fur Kansas City!"

The villain with the solitary eye responded quickly, and the sound of Skinny's voice awakened the others.

Bill Larimer was quickly upon his feet.

"Jingo!" he exclaimed, as he rubbed his eyes and looked at the pleasant scene before him. "I must have slept putty sound, I reckon. Ain't this a sort of a paradise we're in, boys?"

"I reckon it is, Bill," Skinny answered. "I ain't never seen what they calls a real paradise, but from what I've heard, I take it that this here place must be somethin' like one. Everything's lovely here, after leaving ther hot sand an' ther rocks behind us."

The others nodded, and then they went to the brook and treated their faces and hands to some water.

This done, they looked after the horses and mule, and then turned their attention to getting ready something to eat.

The villains had a small supply of provisions with them, as has been stated, and when Bill Larimer suggested that they have some coffee there was not a dissenting voice.

"I reckon we won't see no galoots ridin' around with their heads off here, boys," he observed, with a grin. "If we do we'll have ther chance ter git a good look at 'em, an' that'll be worth somethin'."

"That's right," and Skinny gave a chuckle.

Foolish Mack and One Eye George nodded, but it was plain that they did not feel any way funny about the matter.

Dry wood was there in plenty, and when some of it had been gathered Skinny kindled a fire.

Then a frying-pan and kettle were brought out and they all took a hand in preparing the breakfast.

Salt pork and onions, with some hard biscuit and coffee, was the bill-of-fare, and it just suited the four villains.

They cooked plenty and they ate it all.

The spot where they had camped was in a little hollow that was almost entirely surrounded by tall, flourishing trees such as are to be found in Old Mexico where the land is fertile, near the Arizona border.

The way they had come seemed to be a sort of natural roadway, and a turn in it hid the spot from the view of anyone who might chance to come that way.

The smoke from the fire ascended straight upward, for there was hardly anything in the way of a breeze just then.

They all knew that it would take sharp eyes, indeed, to discover the smoke when it got above the treetops, so they felt easy on that score.

The wood being very dry, there was less smoke, anyhow.

As soon as the breakfast was cooked the fire was extinguished, and when they had done eating Bill Larimer lighted his pipe in a matter-of-fact way, and then took out the real document that contained the chart and information concerning the treasure.

He looked it over carefully, and then called the attention of his companions to something that he could not quite understand.

"Two sharp-pinted slabs of stone, near a big palm tree," he read, as he bent over the paper. "There will be found the entrance to the ruined temple. When the sun is two hours high the space between the shadows cast by the two sharp slabs will be the place to dig. How is that, boys?"

"That is fine, indeed!"

The voice came from the bushes behind Larimer, and the quartet jumped as though they had been shot.

Then from the bushes stepped the headless man, a big revolver in either hand!

"I am glad you have brought that paper here," he said, though they could not tell where the words came from, as there was no head, much less a mouth. "I lost the one I had—the original it was, too. You gentlemen were very kind to bring a copy here. Now I will be able to get the treasure and start away with it in a hurry. I have the pack-mules ready for the purpose, and enough of them to carry two or three tons of gold, too."

The revolvers were pointing toward the four astonished villains, so, if they had felt in the humor to do it, they would hardly have tried to put up a fight.

But they were not feeling that way just then.

There was something so uncanny about the headless man that they stood as if transfixed.

Mechanically Larimer opened his hand and let the paper drop to the ground.

"Diaz, just pick up that document, will you?" said the man without a head, coolly.

Then a flashily-dressed Mexican stepped from behind him, and advancing to the spot, coolly picked up the paper.

It was then that Bill Larimer found the use of his tongue.

"See here!" he said. "I know you must have a head, or you couldn't talk. I reckon yer have got them clothes fixed so they come to ther top of your head, an' you're lookin' through a couple of holes. But what I want ter say is, don't yer think we ought ter have some share in this here treasure? If we hadn't come here you wouldn't have had ther chance ter git it so easy."

"You certainly talk with good sense," replied the headless man. "Since you are all scoundrels, something like ourselves, we will take you in with us. We need a little help to get away with the gold, if there is much of it to be found. We don't want the silver; it is only the gold we are after."

Larimer nodded.

"I sorter reckon that we're entitled ter a share, anyhow," he went on to say.

"Well, you shall have a share. My partner and myself will do the dividing, though."

"All right. We're satisfied to that, ain't we, boys?"

"Yes," came the reply from his three companions, who were much relieved at the way things were turning.

The headless man coolly dropped his revolvers back in the holsters, and then he proceeded to unbutton the coat he wore.

This done, he removed it, showing it to contain false shoulders that fitted upon his own, so the collar would come just above the top of his head, which was covered with a red skull cap.

He looked to be a man of thirty, rather good-looking and shrewd, as he stood smiling before the four villains.

"I guess I don't look so frightful now," he said. "I have named myself Mystery, just for the purpose of frightening others away from this treasure. My friend Diaz and myself were in Tombstone when the professor got the information from the old Indian. We had heard that the redskin possessed the secret of the buried gold and silver, and we had been doing our best to get it from him. We got it, though he had to be killed before we did. Then we set out, and got here ahead of you with our pack-mules. I rather like the looks of you, so you can consider yourselves as under the lead of Mystery, which will be my name for the present."

"All right," answered Larimer. "I reckon that's very satisfactory. Let's go an' git ther treasure right away, there's others here after it, yer know."

"Well, Professor Janeway is after it, we know."

"Well, he's got a couple of boys with him, an' a man, an' a gal, that we know of. One of ther boys, which has got long, light hair, is about as nervy a chap as I ever seen. He—"

"Diaz, I'll wager that he is speaking of Young Wild West," interrupted Mystery, looking at the Mexican.

"The very same," was the reply. "There is no doubt about it. No further description of him need be given me to tell me that. I have seen the boy, and I know what he is."

Wing got the fire burning nicely and then he proceeded to make the coffee.

When this was over the fire he got out a rasher of bacon, and cutting some thin slices, soon had them sizzling in the frying-pan.

Anna took it on herself to make some corn muffins, as she wanted to help along with the dinner and make a good, square meal of it.

There was plenty of smoked venison and bear meat among the supplies, and this, with some baked potatoes, would answer the purpose very well.

Jim Dart declared it would be a meal fit for a king, and there is no doubt but what the reader will agree with me, especially if he had not eaten what might be called a square meal since the night before.

The minutes flitted by and soon dinner was ready.

Wild and Charlie had now been gone more than fifteen minutes, and Arietta began to grow a trifle uneasy.

Something seemed to tell her that the two had run into some kind of danger, but she said nothing just then.

When the cook announced that the meal was ready all hands hesitated about sitting down to it.

It was evident that Arietta was not the only one who was uneasy.

"Ain't it about time that Wild and Charlie showed up?" Dick Ball, the cowboy, asked, as he looked at Jim Dart.

"I should say it was," Dart answered. "From what Wild said, I don't take it that they meant to go very far. But they will show up pretty soon, I reckon."

"Well," remarked Arietta, nodding her golden head in a decisive manner, "if they don't show up inside of ten minutes I am going to look for them. I don't know why it is, but I feel that something must have happened to them. You know very well that when I have felt that way before it has almost invariably turned out to be the case."

"I hope you are wrong, Arietta," the boy answered. "I hardly think that anything could have happened to them. It may be that they have got sight of the four men we are so anxious to find, and that they have started after them."

Then there was a silence for fully five minutes, no one offering to sit down to the waiting meal, which had been so tempting to them all along.

Another five minutes passed, and then Arietta picked up her rifle.

"Jim," she said, "I guess you had better go with me. Perhaps it would be well for Mr. Ball to come also. We can easily follow their footsteps through the sand, I think, and it may be that we will soon find them."

Jim and the cowboy showed their willingness to go with her right away.

"I reckon ther dinner kin wait a while," said the latter. "If there is anything wrong with Wild and Charlie it is fur us to right it as soon as we kin. I would not be a bit surprised if them four galoots was around here somewheres, an' it is jest possible that they have laid a trap for them. Come on! We won't be gone long, professor. Ther rest of yer kin go on an' eat. Don't wait fur us."

With Arietta in the lead, they set out from the camp,

CHAPTER VII.

ARIETTA AND JIM TO THE RESCUE.

Those left at the camp were not long in getting things in shape after Wild and Charlie took their departure.

following the direction that had been taken by our hero and the scout.

As Arietta had said, it was easy to follow the trail, for the footprints of our friends were plainly to be seen in the soft ground.

They went on around, and it was not more than a minute or so before they came to the spot where Wild and the scout had fallen down into the underground place.

There was an opening, which was about as large as that of an ordinary well.

The tracks led straight to it, so there was no doubt in the mind of Jim Dart but what the two had fallen into the hole.

"Don't go too close to it," he said, waving Arietta and the cowboy back. "It might cave in around the edge, and then we would fall in. I will creep up softly and look down there and try and see if they are there."

"Wait, Jim," spoke up Young Wild West's sweetheart, quickly. "Let Mr. Ball go and get a lariat. Then you can tie it about you, while we stand back and hold the other end. If the ground should cave in with you, you will be safe."

The girl was very pale, showing that she feared Wild and Charlie had really fallen into the opening, and that possibly they lay mangled and dead down at the bottom.

But she was very cool, and when she nodded to the cowboy he understood right away, and started on a run for the camp.

Jim knew Arietta had spoken wisely, so he made no further move to go close to the edge of the hole that was so near to the ruins that our hero and the scout had first discovered.

Ball was not gone more than a couple of minutes, and when he came back he was followed by Morgan and Robley, two of the men who had come with him on the trail of the four villains who had stolen the chart from the professor.

The cowboy passed an end of the rope to Jim, who promptly slipped it over his head and beneath his arms.

Then while the three cowboys held the end of the lariat at a distance of perhaps twenty feet from the opening, Jim walked boldly to it.

It was well that the precaution had been taken, for without the least warning the earth crumbled beneath the boy's feet and down he went.

But it was not far that he fell, for the three men holding the rope quickly drew back upon it, and the boy's head and shoulders were plainly to be seen.

"Hold me just as I am for a minute!" called out Jim, as soon as he recovered from the surprise the sudden drop had given him.

"Right yer are!" answered Dick Ball. "We've got yer. Now take a good look down there and tell us what yer see."

Jim did take a good look downward and he soon saw that about twelve feet below the surface of the ground there was a sharp descent of what seemed to be practically smooth rock.

If it had not been that the rope held him up he knew that he would have surely slid downward upon striking thus into the darkness that lay beyond him.

He turned himself completely around, and finding that there was no further danger of the ground caving in, because there was a rock right at his back, he called for Dick Ball to come there.

"The ground won't cave in any more here," he added. "The last bit of it gave away beneath my feet. There is a rock here which looks as though it has been cut and squared by the hands of man, and there is no danger of that giving way, as far as I can see. But you had better keep hold of the rope, just the same."

Leaving his two partners with the rope in their hands the cowboy stepped forward, taking care to keep his hand upon the rope as he did so.

When he got to the edge of the hole he saw that Jim was right in what he said.

There was no danger of the ground caving in any further at that point.

He looked over and saw what Jim had already discovered, and then he said:

"I reckon yer want ter go down there, eh, Jim?"

"Yes," was the reply; "that's just what I do. But maybe this rope isn't long enough. Send one of the boys back to get a couple more. There is no telling just how far I may have to go before I strike bottom."

"Go an' git a couple more ropes, Morgan," Ball called out. "Yer be quick about it, too."

As Morgan started to obey, Arietta ventured to the edge of the opening.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "it must be that Wild and Charlie fell down there. Do you think they have been killed, Jim?"

"No," replied the boy, shaking his head as though he felt sure they had not. "This is the ruins of some temple, or other building, that was erected many years ago by the Aztec Indians, and you can bet that if they fell in here they simply landed into some dark chamber beneath us."

"S'pose yer yell out ter 'em?" suggested Dick Ball. "If they are down there, an' ain't been killed, they will certainly hear yer."

"No," and Dart shook his head, decisively. "That won't do. You forget that there may be others around here, and we don't want to let them know of our presence. You go on and let me down as far as the rope will go. If it doesn't reach the bottom, hold me. I'll tie on another. I reckon another one ought to be enough."

"Jest as you say, Jim," the cowboy replied, and without any further delay, he proceeded to lower the boy into the hole.

When Jim's feet struck the slippery descent he tried to gain a footing, but found it impossible.

He saw fresh dirt scattered about the sides of the chute-like passage, and then there was no doubt in his mind but that his two partners had dropped into the hole and had gone shooting down the quick descent.

"Go on and lower me," he called out to the cowboy, and when he looked up and saw Arietta bending over the hole, her face pale with fear and anxiety, he made up his mind that he would find Wild and Charlie if it were possible to do so.

Dick Ball let out upon the rope and down went Jim slowly, but surely.

He got himself into a sitting posture now, and was going downward much after the fashion of one coasting down a hill.

"Whew!" he thought. "No wonder they disappeared, for they must have gone sliding down at a two-forty gait. I hope they didn't strike anything at the bottom that would cause them injury."

Down went the boy until the end of the rope was reached.

"Are yer pretty near there?" called out Ball from the surface of the ground above.

"Not yet," retorted Jim. "Tie on another rope and keep on letting me down. I will let you know when I get there."

After a wait of about a minute he went quickly downward again, and when about half of the second rope had been let out he came to the dust pile at the foot of the incline, where Wild and Charlie had landed in a confused heap nearly half an hour before.

Jim quickly got upon his feet, and giving a tug upon the rope to indicate that he had arrived safely at the bottom, he called out:

"I have struck a sort of cellar, I reckon. But it is so dark down here that I can't see anything. Wait till I light a match and have a look around. Then I will tell you what to do."

"All right," came the reply from Ball, in a voice that sounded as though very far off, though Jim knew that it could not have been more than seventy or eighty feet, at the most.

The boy struck a match, and then he saw the chamber that our hero and the scout had passed through.

But he saw more than that, for upon the dust-covered flooring of the places were the prints of their feet.

Jim Dart's heart gave a throb of joy.

Now he knew that his two partners had not been hurt by the fall.

He walked to the chamber that opened from the underground apartment the chute ended at, and striking another match held it close to the ground.

The dust of years had accumulated there, and that made it easy for him to see the footprints, and where they led.

The boy stood still for a moment, thinking hard.

"Yes," he decided to utter a shout, so if Wild and Charlie were within hearing they might know that someone had come to their rescue.

"Wild! Charlie!" he called out as loudly as he could.

His voice echoed through the underground place, and before the echoes had died away he heard a faint answering shout.

"Hurrah!" he cried, turning his voice toward the chute. "They are here, Arietta!"

The cry of joy that came from the girl's lips told him how pleased she was at hearing the welcome words.

Then the voice of Dick Ball called down to him, saying:

"Jim, ther gal insists on coming down, an' I s'pose she's got ter come."

"All right," Dart answered. "I reckon she is not afraid. Let her come."

The next minute a movement of the rope told him that Arietta was making the descent.

Jim walked back to the foot of the slippery chute, and as the girl came down he assisted her to her feet.

It was just then that a shout was heard from some part of the underground place, and Arietta instantly recognized it as coming from her dashing young lover.

"Wild! Wild!" she cried. "Oh! I'm so glad!"

"Have you got a light with you?" the voice of our hero called out, faintly, but so they could hear and understand the words. "We are lost in this place. We only had a few matches with us, and we have used them all up in trying to find our way back. We must have struck a wrong passage, for we have come to a place where we can go no further, and where we can hear you as though you are directly ahead of us."

"Stay right where you are, Wild," Jim shouted. "We will have a lantern in a jiffy. Are you both all right?"

"Yes, we're both all right. We found another way to get out, but it was not good policy for us to proceed, so we came back, thinking that perhaps you had found the hole we dropped through. We will take it easy until you get the lantern. But look out that someone don't come around and surprise you. There are others here besides the four villains we were following."

"I reckon we'll have to look out for them, then," Jim answered.

Then he turned to Arietta and said:

"Let them haul you up. Send one of the men after a lantern, and be sure to tell them what Wild just said."

"All right," replied the girl, joyous at the thought that her young lover and the scout were safe. "I'll go up in a hurry."

Dart let her take the rope, and then he shouted for the cowboys to pull her up.

This was quickly done, and then it was not long before she returned, bringing a lighted lantern with her.

Arietta at once led the way through the big chamber.

She meant to be the first one to see Wild, if it was possible.

Jim left the rope in the doorway and hurried along with her.

"Where are you, Wild?" he said, loudly, as they came to the passage that led from the underground chamber, where the ruins of the altar were.

"Here!" came the faint reply from the other side of a great wall of rock.

"Go back, and then turn to your left, and I think you will find the way."

"All right."

Arietta pushed through the passage.

She was keeping her eyes open, and she had not gone more than twenty yards when she saw where the passage branched off.

It had been very easy for Wild and Charlie to take this, since they had about exhausted their matches when they got there.

They had waited a while near the mouth of the passage they had come to, but thinking it best not to go out that way, they had at last turned and gone back.

Though they heard nothing further after the man invited them to come out and be shot, they both felt that

he must be waiting, and that it was quite likely that there were more with him.

Arietta had only walked a few steps in the passage when she heard footfalls.

Someone was coming, and she felt that it was surely Wild and Charlie.

She was right, too, for the footsteps sounded nearer, and the next minute the two lost ones appeared in the light the lantern threw out.

Arietta put the lantern on the ground and threw herself into the arms of the young deadshot.

Charlie quickly picked up the lantern and said:

"I reckon there ain't much time fur huggin' an kissin'. We must git out of here."

"That's all right, Charlie," our hero replied. "Go ahead."

"I am mighty glad to see you both alive," Jim Dart observed, as he seized their hands and gave them a hearty shake.

"Well, it seems that we all have a way of turning up when we get lost," Wild said, with a laugh. "It was quite an adventure we had; but I reckon it is only the forerunner of more that are to come. As I said, when I shouted to you, there are others around here besides the four galoots we are after. We saw one of them, and he knows us. He called me by name, and he told me that the treasure was removed this morning."

"An' he said if Wild was so good at follerin' trails he could start on ther trail of ther treasure," added the scout.

"Which is something I will do all right," declared our hero.

They now hurried back to the end of the chute, and then, one at a time, they were pulled up by the cowboys.

Wild was the last to come up, and when he arrived safely he said:

"Now then, to get to the camp. I want something to eat before I do anything further."

As cool as though there had been nothing out of the ordinary to happen, the dashing young deadshot linked arms with Arietta and hurried for the camp, followed by the rest.

To say that they received a warm welcome would hardly be expressing it.

Young Wild West now felt that there was a mystery to be solved, and their real adventure in Old Mexico had hardly begun.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TREASURE IS TAKEN AWAY BY THE VILLAINS.

Bill Larimer and his men were not long in getting acquainted with the man, who called himself Mystery, and Diaz, the Mexican.

They told all about how they had stolen the paper from Professor Janeway, and how they had deceived those who had surprised them and demanded it from them.

Diaz questioned them closely about the two boys and

man and the girl, and then he was satisfied that they were Young Wild West and his partners and sweetheart, for he had seen them all before.

"Young Wild West is a bad one to have on your trail," he said, as he looked at the man, who so cleverly posed as the "headless man." "I have heard say that he never leaves a trail until he has accomplished his purpose."

"Well, we will give him a chance to get on a treasure trail, then," was the reply. "If he does get on it we will fix it so he dies before he gets the treasure. You leave that to me. I am Mystery, and I am going to be as long as we remain in Old Mexico."

The man spoke in such a confident way that Larimer and his friends felt more relieved than ever.

"You will come with us to our camp," said Mystery, after a pause. "We found the two sharp slabs and the tree, because we remembered what was written at the bottom of the chart. But I lost the chart almost as soon as we got here. It dropped from my hand and fell into a crevice, and that was the last we saw of it. There was no way to get it, as the crevice was not wide enough to descend, so we had to let it go."

"Well, I'm mighty glad we come across you," Larimer retorted, showing he meant what he said by a vigorous nod. "We couldn't have got away with ther gold, even if we had found it; an' ther chances are that we would have got in a whole lot of trouble with that boy you call Young Wild West. We'd fight ter hold ther treasure, of course, an' if he's all that yer say he is, he'd most likely git ther best of us in ther end. But with you ter lead us, he won't stand no show at all."

Mystery smiled, for he was pleased at what the villain said.

They all left the spot as soon as the four men gathered together their belongings.

They led their horses and followed Mystery and the Mexican, who were not long in reaching their camp.

This was located behind a square formation of earth and rock, about a hundred yards from the place where Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie broke through the ground and landed into the underground place that had once no doubt been a temple of the lost Aztec race.

The high wall of rock shut off sounds, so our friends were not heard by the villains when they arrived in the valley.

But this was hardly to be expected, anyhow, since the proper instructions to guide them, Mystery and soon discovered the entrance to the underground place.

They found the treasure there, too!

After digging loose a flat slab that was at least twelve feet square, it dropped down and made a roadway right into the passage that ran downward into the very passage Wild and Charlie had come through after the horseman, who, by the way, was no other than Mystery, himself.

The treasure easily amounted to the value of three hundred thousand dollars, and after the last of it had been brought up, Mystery rode his horse back into the place, and was just in time to hear Wild and the scout talking in the big chamber.

He could not see them, but guessing who it was, he had said what has been recorded in a previous chapter.

Then he hastened to get out, and when he heard the

two coming through the passage, he was at the opening with Diaz and Larimer.

The other three villains had loaded the pack-mules, and were already leaving the spot.

But finding that the two were not coming out to be shot down, the three soon left the place and followed those who had gone ahead with the treasure.

Mystery and Diaz had certainly brought plenty of mules and a good outfit with them.

Provisions they had in plenty, and everything they had that would hold water was already filled before their meeting with Larimer and his three companions.

The three were not long in overtaking the others, who were traveling slowly.

But they could not proceed very fast, if they wanted to, for pack-mules are not inclined to cover the ground very fast, as a rule.

Tombstone was the nearest place they knew of, so Mystery decided to go there.

With the loaded mules it would take them nearly four days to make the distance.

But they were more than satisfied with the rich haul they had made from the Aztec ruins, and they did not mind the distance so much.

When they had left the place a mile behind them Larimer turned to Mystery and said:

"It would be jest as well if yer was ter tell us how much we're ter git out of this pile of gold, boss."

"Well, all right," was the reply. "I think it would be fair if Diaz and myself took half, and gave you fellows the other half. What do you say to that?"

"Don't yer think it oughter be divided up even? We done as much work in gittin' it out as you did—an' more, too, 'cause there was four workin' ag'in you two."

"But if it had not been for us you would never have found it," the "headless man" insisted.

"Oh, yes, we would have found it, too. We ain't so thick as all that."

"But Young Wild West would have come along and taken it away from you. You could never have got away with it, and you know it. I don't want any dissatisfaction about it, but I think I have made a fair proposition."

"Let it go at that, Bill," spoke up Skinny, though if Mystery and Diaz could have seen the peculiar gleam in his sunken eyes they would have had ample cause for suspicion.

But he happened to be looking in another direction, and they failed to see.

"All right, then," answered Larimer. "I s'pose it is fair, when yer come ter think of it."

But there was trouble brewing for the clever villain, who called himself Mystery. The four villains meant to have all the gold, and before they reached Tombstone, too. The greed for riches will do a lot sometimes, and they were just the sort to murder to gain their point.

CHAPTER IX.

LARIMER AND HIS MEN TAKE POSSESSION.

The six men who had succeeded in finding the treasure in the ruins of the Aztec temple rode on until night overtook them.

They were now upon the desert, but this mattered little to them, since they were heading in nearly a straight line for Tombstone.

They were not taking the course that had been followed by Larimer and his two men, but were heading more toward the Arizona line.

Since the question in regard to the division of the treasure had been settled but little had been said about it.

Mystery and Diaz were apparently satisfied that there would be no trouble in the least in dividing it when they got to Tombstone; but Larimer and the other three were thinking it over almost continually as they rode along, and when they reached the spot where they were to remain until morning they had settled upon a plan by which they might kill the two men they had joined forces with, and then make off with the treasure.

They had lots of chances during the afternoon to exchange opinions, and this was the result that had been reached by them.

But not by word or look did they let the two know what they had in their minds.

The camp was soon fixed up, and after supper was eaten they all sat down to smoke and talk over the prospects they had in view.

After a while Mystery got out the coat he wore when impersonating the Headless Man, saying as he did so:

"There's no telling how soon Young Wild West and his friends might come along, so I think it will be in order to have things ready to frighten them away. I fancy that even Young Wild West will quail when he sees a headless horseman riding past him and holding a flaming skull to light his way. Ha, ha, ha! How it frightened you fellows, Larimer."

"It sartinly did," the leader of the four villains answered, shaking his head. "My pards here allowed that you was a ghost, an' I sorter thought that way myself, first off. But it was not long afore I guessed it was some-one tryin' to scare us away from where ther treasure was. You're sartinly a mighty fine actor at that game, boss."

"Yes, I rather flatter myself that I am," and the villain who impersonated the Headless Man, smiled in a pleased way.

He then proceeded to lay out the coat, so that he might be able to don it at a short notice, and this done he called Diaz aside and started a whispered conversation with him.

This caused the four villains who had joined with them to grow a bit suspicious.

It struck them that those they had plotted against might be expecting something to happen.

Larimer leaned over and placed his mouth to the ear of Skinny, who he seemed to regard as the proper one to make known his thoughts just then, and whispered:

"Say, we might jest as well settle this here business right now. Them two galoots is there talkin' together, an' it is most likely that they're puttin' up a job to git ther whole thing away from us. What do yer say if we catch 'em an' tie 'em so they can't git away, an' then light out in a different direction with ther gold? We kin do it easy enough, an' there ain't no reason, if we keep goin' over ther sand, that we can't fool Young Wild West and

ther rest too. Speak quick, Skinny, an' let me hear how yer feel about it."

"I feel all right, Bill," was the reply. "You jest say ther word, an' yer kin bet your life I'll be right with you."

Larimer then quickly whispered his idea to the other two, and, as might be supposed, they readily assented.

The fact was that Mystery and Diaz were simply talking over some business they had between them that had nothing to do with the gold they had taken from the underground place. They didn't want those they had taken in with them to hear, and so they had stepped aside, as has been stated.

The conversation lasted longer than either of them thought it would, when they began to talk, and the first thing they knew they were pounced upon by Larimer and his partners.

Taken completely by surprise, they could do nothing, and in less time than it takes to write it they were rendered powerless.

"What—what does this mean?" gasped Mystery, as he found the use of his tongue. "Haven't we treated you fellows fair? What do you mean, anyhow?"

"We mean that we're goin' ter have ther whole of ther treasure, or nothin'," answered Larimer, as he proceeded to bind the man's arms to his satisfaction. "We're goin' ter leave you two fellers here on ther sand, so ther sun kin shine on yer to-morrow an' broil yer. Us four kin handle this here treasure a good deal better than you galoots kin. That's what we mean, boss!"

Mystery struggled fiercely to free himself, but it was no use.

The four villains had certainly done their work quickly and well.

Diaz fumed and swore in Spanish, but he was only laughed at, and finally he became silent.

It was just about this time that a stiff breeze came up, and gradually increasing in force, it turned into what might be called a regular gale.

The sand went flying in clouds, and the villains were almost blinded.

But not until they made sure that there was no possible chance of Mystery and Diaz getting free did Larimer and his partners quit using the ropes they had.

When the sand got to interfering with them so fiercely the horses huddled in a bunch and lay down, and leaving the two villains lying prone upon the ground, the four who had conquered them got close to the horses on the sheltering side, and waited until the sandstorm was over.

It did not last more than ten minutes, but in that time great changes were wrought upon the desert.

Where there had been white, level stretches there were now heaps of sand; and where there had been heaps of sand before was nothing but a straight stretch of waste, with here and there the brown rocks protruding. But this could not be seen in the darkness, of course.

None of the villains realized that there had been a change just then, but they were destined to find it out when daylight came.

They made themselves as comfortable as possible, and leaving their two victims lying where they had left them, they went to sleep, not thinking it possible that Young

Wild West and his friends could find them, after the sandstorm.

This they knew must surely have obliterated the trail they made since they had struck the glittering, white sand.

When morning dawned the four were up and stirring. They all knew that the sun must be up by this time, but a peculiar sort of haze hung over the desert, and it was impossible to see it.

They could not see one single landmark that would indicate in which direction they had come, and puzzled sorely, they looked at one another.

"I reckon this is what yer might call a putty state of affairs," observed Bill Larimer, shaking his head. "Here we are, with three hundred thousand dollars worth of gold, an' we don't know which way to strike out with it. What are yer goin' ter do about it, boys?"

Skinny, who prided himself upon being as clever as the average man, took another look around, and then pointing toward a high piece of rock that looked something like the top of an ancient castle, said:

"I reckon that's ther way ter go, Bill. I'm sartin sure I seen that there thing that looks something like a broken-down lighthouse jest afore ther sun set. We was headin' right then, so if we go that way we'll be headin' right now."

"Are yer sure of that?" asked the leader, who evidently had his doubts about it.

"Sartin sure, Bill."

"All right, then. As soon as we git something ter eat we will strike out."

Half buried in the sand, Mystery and Diaz listened to the conversation.

Like those who had made them prisoners, they did not have the least idea as to which way might be east or west, but they thought it best to say nothing.

A hasty breakfast was prepared and eaten, and then the villains started in to put the loads on the mules, so that they might proceed in the direction they had chosen as the right one.

It took them some little time to do this, but when they were ready they mounted their own horses, and never so much as saying a word to the two lying in the sand, they rode off.

It was then that Mystery and Diaz called loudly to them to release them, they declaring that they would not ask for any part of the treasure if they would.

But the villains laughed mockingly and kept on, and it was not long before they looked like mere specks in the distance, and finally were lost to view behind the sand hills.

Meanwhile Larimer and his companions proceeded on, keeping the mules in line and doing their best to urge them to a good gait.

The sun refused to show itself, and the hours passed by until they knew it must be getting along toward noon.

"Do you know one thing, boys," said Larimer, as he shook his head and looked disgusted. "Both them galoots had watches, an' not one of us had sense enough ter take 'em away from 'em. The sun ain't shinin' ter let us know

when it's time ter eat, so we've got ter guess at it. If we had a watch we would be all right, I reckon."

"Well, we didn't have any watches afore we met them two galoots," replied Skinny; "so I reckon we kin git along without 'em now. Ther sun ain't goin' ter stay under all day, it ain't likely, so I say let's keep on goin' till we get good an' hungry, and then take a rest."

"That's the idea," said One Eye George. "I reckon I kin stand it fer an hour yet, an' if I kin stand it, ther rest of yer ought ter be able ter."

Larimer nodded at this, and then once more he turned his gaze toward the landmark that Skinny had declared was the proper thing for them to follow.

This must have been miles away, and the haze which shut out the sun's rays was no doubt above it, else the villains could not have seen it.

A mile ahead of them they saw a high hidge of rugged rocks, fantastic in shape in many places, and the villains hoped that they might strike something better than the sandy waste when they got there.

When the distance had been covered, and they had found a narrow pass to lead them to the other side of the ridge, they all felt in better spirits.

Through the pass they rode, leading the tired mules behind them.

When they did get through it was a welcome sight that met their eyes, for here were green trees and shrubbery, and the odor of sweet-scented wild flowers came to their nostrils.

"I reckon we have got away from ther blamed old desert all right!" exclaimed Bill Larimer. "This is what I calls mighty good, boys. Now then, we'll jest have a good rest. There ain't no one livin' as could follow us here, I'm sartin of that."

"That's what's ther matter, Bill," nodded Skinny, his sunken eyes, gleaming with satisfaction. "I knowed I was right when I said that this was ther way ter come."

But little did the four villains dream that they had come almost directly back to the starting point, and that they were now in the valley again, with the place the gold had been hidden less than a mile away.

CHAPTER X.

MYSTERY TURNS THE TABLES.

The villains called Mystery and Diaz actually gave themselves up as lost when Bill Larimer and his men disappeared behind the sand hills.

They were both in a weakened condition, but this did not prevent them from making a desperate struggle to free themselves.

It was really what might be termed the last effort that could possibly amount to anything.

Diaz raved and swore in Spanish, but Mystery kept at it, gritting hard upon his teeth.

Suddenly a cry of joy came from his lips, and then Diaz became suddenly still.

"What is it, Enders?" he asked.

"I have got my hands free, Diaz."

"What!"

"You wait a minute and I'll have you free, too."

"Oh! Do you mean that, Harper Enders?"

To prove that he did mean it, Mystery, or Harper Enders, which was his real name, suddenly arose to his feet.

He stretched his arms and shook first one foot and then the other, until he got his blood circulating freely, and then he turned his attention to the Mexican.

It was not long before he had him free, and then, assisting him to his feet, he said:

"Now then, we will see who will win out. Diaz, we must overtake those four men, and we must kill them! Do you hear what I say?"

"I hear," was the reply. "But how are we to do it? We have no horses, and they took our weapons from us."

"My horse did not go with them, Diaz. He is somewhere about here now. I could see them plainly when they left, and I know they did not have my horse. They had yours, however."

"If we can only find him, then," and Diaz brightened up and started to rubbing his numbed wrists.

"And I have a revolver, too, Diaz," resumed the American, as he went to the spot where he had laid all the night, half covered with sand, and by feeling about, produced the weapon.

"There it is!" he exclaimed. "When I was struggling with the rascals I managed to get a revolver from the holster. But they pinned me so sharp that I could not use it, and I managed to push it under the sand. I did not think it would ever be of any use to me when I found that the scoundrels really meant to leave us. But here it is, and I promise you, Diaz, that I am going to use it on Larimer and his men! I will keep pulling the trigger until the cylinder is empty, and I mean to do it at very short range, too."

"Good!" exclaimed the Mexican. "Now to find your horse."

The two promptly set out in quest of the animal, though Diaz had his doubts about the four men leaving the animal behind.

In less than five minutes he uttered a glad cry, for as they rounded a big heap of sand they saw the horse standing with drooping head.

"I told you so!" cried Mystery, as we will keep on calling him. "I knew he was here."

The horse raised his head when he heard them, and then, with a whinny of pleasure, he came trotting to meet them.

It was really a splendid animal that Mystery owned, and when he had patted the glossy neck and spoken in an affectionate way to the steed, he led him back to the camp that had been deserted by those who had played them false.

"I know there must be some things here that they failed to get, for they went away in a hurry," the American declared. "The sand storm covered everything, and if we don't find water and something to eat, by looking sharp, I will miss my guess."

The Mexican nodded, and then they proceeded to make a search.

Mystery was quite right in what he said, for it was not long before they discovered a small water keg, which was nearly full.

Then they came upon a big frying pan which had belonged to their own outfit, and then a bag of crackers was pulled out of the sand.

The next thing that the rascally American came across was the remarkable coat he wore when posing as the headless man, and he carefully lifted it from the sand and shook it to free it from the tiny particles.

"I rather think I will use this soon, Diaz," he said. "Anyhow, I shall take it along."

"That is right, Enders," replied his companion. "I don't blame you if you do. That is certainly a remarkable disguise. I never saw anything half as neat."

They made a further search, but nothing could they find.

Mystery thought for a moment or two, and then he said:

"There is just about enough water in that keg to give us all we want for the present, and to fill up the horse. I say to drink it now, after we eat some biscuits, and trust to luck to find more."

"I agree with you. What you say will go, as you Americans say."

"Very well, then. We will eat breakfast and then be off on the trail, which will be a plain one, since there is no air stirring to fill the tracks."

They each swallowed a little of the water, and then they made as good a meal as they could of the dry crackers.

They were rather thirsty, as might be supposed, and they drank plenty of water, pouring it into the frying pan to permit them to get a good chance at it.

When they could hold no more they gave the rest to the horse, and the animal was so much refreshed that he appeared anxious to get away from the spot.

There was naught but a halter on the steed, but Mystery quickly rigged this into an improvised bridle, and then the two mounted, not forgetting to take the disguise with them.

"Even if my horse has got a double burden, we can cover the ground much faster than the mules can," the American observed. "But we don't want to overtake them scoundrels too soon. We would make out better if we could reach them when they are taking a rest."

The Mexican nodded.

There was no doubt but that he relied entirely upon the judgment of his friend.

Though he had not been fed since the day before, the horse showed that he had considerable strength left, and he was willing to go faster than Mystery would let him.

In a little over an hour from the time they started they came in sight of the pack-mules less than a mile ahead of them.

"There they are!" exclaimed the American, as he quickly turned the horse toward a high wall of rock, so they might not be seen, in case the men were looking back. "Now we know we are all right. Diaz, we will keep

following them until they reach the end of the sand strip. Then they will surely halt, and it will be quite easy to creep upon them and give them a surprise, I think."

The Mexican nodded, something that he was accustomed to doing often.

"As you say," he answered.

They dismounted and gave the horse a fifteen minutes' rest.

"I don't know whether that man was right or not when he said the high peak over there that bears a strong resemblance to a lighthouse was a landmark to follow," said Mystery, as he gazed at the high mark that showed quite distinctly. "If the sun was shining we could tell just about where we are heading. But it makes no difference, anyhow. We want to catch the four napping, and have our revenge upon them, as well as get back our gold. It is our gold, because it would never have been taken from the buried temple if it had not been for us. What could they have done with the little outfit they have with them? Why, it was about all the little pack-mule could do to carry what they need to camp with."

"You are right in all you say, Enders," nodded the Mexican. "Shall we go on now?"

"Yes, we will go on until we sight them again, and then we will halt and give the horse another rest."

This plan was carried out; the result was they halted three times after that, the third when the four villains reached the valley and were about to go through the pass into it.

Like them, neither Mystery nor Diaz knew they had come back to the valley they had taken the treasure from.

They thought they were well on their way to Tombstone, and that the rest of the journey would be made with comparative ease, after they had settled accounts with Bill Larimer and his men.

Giving them plenty of time to get through the pass, the two set out after them, the tired horse pricking up his ears as he scented what lay beyond.

It was just as they got through, and could see the luxuriant foliage before them, that the sun came out.

It was almost directly over their heads, so there was nothing to go by just then.

They dismounted and let the horse take to the grass.

Then they looked around, and it was not long before they saw a column of smoke rising off to the right.

The distance to it was less than half a mile, and with a nod of satisfaction, Mystery exclaimed:

"Diaz, now is the time! We will creep upon them and take them by surprise."

"But we have but one revolver between us," came the hesitating reply.

"You just leave it to me. I'll get something more in the way of weapons before we start in to clean them out. I'll show you how clever I am at stealing from wide awake people. It will be easy to do it from those fellows. They are not very bright at anything, except that they seem to know the value of gold."

"Well, you are more clever than I am, I know. But don't think that I won't do my share. If I had a revolver

"I would join in with you in shooting them down before they had a chance of defending themselves."

"I suppose I might do that alone—I did intend to try it that way at first. But I think it would be better if I could creep up and steal some of their weapons from them."

"It would be surer; but suppose they catch you in the act?"

"If they happen to do that I will be the first one to shoot, you can rest easy on that. I will be ready to shoot at any moment."

"Well, try it, if you think you can do it."

"I can, and will do it."

The Mexican said no more.

Mystery now examined his revolver.

He removed the remaining particles of sand from it, and found it was in perfect working order.

"Now then, come on, Diaz," he said. "We will lead the horse pretty close, and then we will go forward on foot until we get so close to them that there is danger of being discovered. I will then creep up, and we will soon have the treasure all to ourselves."

Without another word, he took the horse by the bridle and started along the plain trail the villains had made.

Diaz followed, as a matter of course.

They were not long in getting close to the spot from which the smoke was rising.

But not until they could hear the voices of men did they stop.

Leaving the horse upon a patch of luxuriant grass, they both stepped forward noiselessly.

When they got to a place from which they could see those who were carrying on the conversation Mystery motioned for his companion to remain there.

Then he crept forward in a way that showed he had had some experience in woodcraft.

He could see the pack-mules, with the heavy loads removed from them, and a glitter came in his eyes that showed plainly that a demon was lurking there.

Bill Larimer was sitting on the ground, with his back against a tree; while his companions were busy getting the noonday meal ready.

Their rifles were stacked against the same tree he was leaning against, and there was an air of peace and contentment about him.

Mystery moved stealthily and got behind him.

With his revolver ready to fire at the least notice, he got his other hand upon one of the rifles.

He removed it from its position without being discovered.

The villains were not looking that way just then, so he took another.

As he put his hand upon the third the man called Skinny happened to look that way.

"Look out, Bill!" he shouted. "There's a——"

Crack!

Skinny dropped, for the range was so short that Mystery could hardly miss.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Three shots were fired, so quickly that the men could not have known where they came from.

Larimer got the last bullet, and when he rolled over, done for, Mystery called for Diaz to come.

CHAPTER XI.

TRAILING THE TREASURE.

Young Wild West and his friends remained at the camp for at least half an hour after the rescue from the underground place.

They felt sure that someone was watching them all the time, and they were on the alert for danger.

But nothing did they hear, and after a while our hero decided to take a look around.

"Come, Charlie," he said, as he picked up his rifle. "I reckon we know about where the mouth of that passage is. We'll work our way around among the rocks and ruins and see what the galoots are up to."

"Good enough!" exclaimed the scout, who was ready and willing to go.

All hands thought that those who claimed that the treasure was taken away that morning had told an untruth, and that it was still there.

Professor Janeway was very hopeful, for the confidence that Young Wild West showed made him think that there was no such thing as failing, especially after what had happened.

Wild and Charlie worked their way around, using the shrubbery and rocks to conceal their movements, and at length they came in sight of a spot where an excavation had been made, for they could see a small pile of fresh earth.

But there was no sign of a human being there.

Our hero was pretty sure that they must be quite near the spot where the underground passage opened and it now struck him quite forcibly that the man who had said the treasure was gone spoke the truth after all.

They waited for a few minutes, and then they both crept stealthily toward the spot.

It did not take a minute for them to see fresh hoofprints in plenty, and then they knew that they had come too late to catch the villains there.

The next minute they were busy making an investigation.

The hoofprints were so plentiful that there was no telling how many horses and mules had been there.

It was not long before they found the mouth of the passage.

Near it were two big urns, which were undoubtedly of solid silver.

As the scout pushed one of them over two golden coins rolled from it.

Wild picked them up and saw that they were Spanish, and of very ancient coinage.

"They have got the treasure, Charlie," he said. "The galoot told the truth when he said so. Now it is for us to start on the trail. I will show them that I can trail a treasure, as well as anything else. Go and tell the rest to get ready to move. I will wait here till you come back."

"All right, Wild," answered the scout. "I reckon you're right. I'll bet that ther four galoots fell in with others

what was here ahead of 'em, an' that they've j'ined in an' made a good job of it."

"Quite likely. But it don't make any difference how many of them there are. They have shown that they are villains, and they have threatened our lives. That means that we have the right to pursue them, and if we catch them, take possession of the treasure. If that man had not made his threats I would have felt as though we had no right to interfere with him. But now it is different. He invited me to trail the treasure, and that is just what I am going to do."

Charlie quickly started for the camp, taking as short a cut as possible.

The finding of the two gold coins was quite enough evidence to convince Young Wild West that the treasure was gone.

As he looked around him he saw that there was more evidence of a temple having stood there than there was on the side he and Charlie had broken through and slid down the chute.

Right near the stone slab was part of the wall of a stone building, a square opening in it that might have once been called a window.

He walked around behind this and found he could ascend to it easily.

Then he stood looking through until he saw Charlie and the cowboys coming.

They were all mounted, and as they saw him they called out and waved their hats.

"Ther rest will be here as soon as they git ther pack-horses loaded, Wild," Cheyenne Charlie said, as he halted and dismounted. "Arietta will fetch Spitfire."

"S'pose we go down there an' see if they took away everything?" suggested Dick Ball.

"Well, we might as well, I suppose," our hero answered.

All but one of the cowboys went down, he remaining to take care of the horses.

They were not long in finding where the treasure had been.

A little vault right behind the altar was open, and it was from this the silver urns had been removed and the gold coins and other valuables taken from them.

A few coins were found that the villains had neglected, and then they all went out through the passage.

It was not long before Arietta came riding up, leading Wild's sorrel stallion.

She soon learned the state of affairs, and then she looked at her dashing young lover and said:

"Wild, we ought to overtake them very easily."

"Yes, Et. They won't get away from us, you can rest assured on that."

The rest soon reached the spot, and then there was nothing to keep them there any longer.

"Now to start on the trail of the treasure, professor," said Wild, as he mounted his horse. "It seems that we don't need the chart, after all. The villains were kind enough to get the gold out of the vault for us."

Professor Janeway shook his head.

"It would seem that since they were the ones to find it, they should be entitled to it," he answered.

"I thought that way myself at first. But I have

changed my mind. You know very well that you were the only one who gained the information from the old Indian. That being the case, you are entitled to whatever has been found here. The fact that the four rascals palmed off a fictitious chart on us, and that the man who challenged me to follow the trail must be one of those who killed the old Indian, makes it quite plain that we should capture the treasure and hold it. It is yours by right, professor."

"Well, it does look that way," and the professor brightened up.

"Come on. We'll be off without any further delay."

But, as the reader knows, the six villains had a good start of them, and if they did not proceed swiftly they would not soon overtake them.

Wild, thinking it would be a sure thing, did not go on ahead of the main party, but contented himself with the knowledge that they were gaining on the fugitives at every step.

The trail was a plain one, even when they reached the desert waste.

The sandstorm came up, but it happened that they got protection from it behind a cliff.

Wild and his partners knew quite well that the trail was now covered, but they were not discouraged.

It was a tedious sort of a night they put in, and when they found that the sun did not shine in the morning, so they might be able to set their course by it, the pocket compass that our hero always carried was brought into use.

"Oh, we will get them, never fear," he assured the professor. "All we have to do is to find where they spent the night. It will be easy after that. Don't get discouraged, professor."

"I am not discouraged," was the reply. "But I was in hopes that we would overtake them quickly, and settle the matter. Then I meant to go back to the ruins of the temple and make an examination of it, so I might make a report when I get back to civilization."

"Well, we won't be long now. Just as soon as we have eaten breakfast we'll start out."

The breakfast was soon prepared, and then they ate rather hurriedly.

Mounting their horses, they rode on in the same direction they had been following.

In less than an hour they suddenly came upon fresh hoofprints in the sand.

There were many of them, too, but when Wild found that they were going almost directly toward the little valley he was puzzled.

"Back to the ruins of the temple we go, professor. The galoots have lost their way, and they are heading about where they started from. That just suits you, I reckon."

"It does, if such is really the case," was the reply.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRAIL NEARS THE END.

Both Young Wild West and his partners were confident that the villains had lost their way and were traveling in the direction of the valley by mistake.

Since the sun had failed to show it was not as warm as it might be, though the air was rather oppressive.

They continued on for, fully two hours before they stopped to give the horses a rest, and when this had been done went on again.

The party continued on this way across the desert, following the trail through the sand with the greatest ease, and about an hour after noon they reached the valley.

The sun was now shining brightly, and the singing of the birds in the luxuriant foliage sounded pleasant to their ears.

Instead of following the trail now, they turned to the left, so that they might halt somewhere in the woods, and then have the opportunity of finding out just where the villains were.

A suitable place was soon found, and then they dismounted.

"I want everybody to keep perfectly still now," said Wild. "We have entered the valley from the north end, which makes us about a mile and a half from where we were camped before leaving yesterday afternoon. Charlie and I will go and find where the galoots are, and when we have done this we will come back and report. Then we will decide upon just exactly what we are going to do about it. Take it easy, everybody. We are not going to get caught in a trap this time, either from accident or design."

"Be careful, Wild," said Arietta, warningly. "You have very clever villains to cope with, and you must not lose any of your caution."

"That's all right, Et," was the smiling reply. "Don't you worry in the least. We have trailed the treasure, and we will soon have possession of it. It makes no difference if there are a dozen of the villains. We will get it, just the same."

Then the dashing young deadshot and the scout rode off, taking the trail that led through the valley.

They allowed their horses to walk, as they did not want to make any noise that might be heard by the men they were after, and when they had covered about a quarter of a mile they suddenly came upon four bodies that were lying upon the ground.

One glance told them the dead bodies were those of Bill Larimer and his partners.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the scout. "I wonder who done this?"

"I don't know, Charlie," answered our hero, shaking his head. "But I have an idea that the men we saw riding out of the buried temple yesterday might know something about it."

"It does sorter look that way, that's so."

"They have had a falling out, I suppose. But never mind that. We won't have so many to fight now. Come on."

The ground was pretty well cut up by the hoofs of the horses and mules, and mounting their horses, our two friends started on the trail.

Through the woods they went, and when they found that it swung around directly toward the place the treasure had been removed from they were not a little surprised.

As they mounted a slight rise in the ground they suddenly came in sight of the horses and mules.

They were at a halt near the ruins, and when they saw that the loads had been taken from the backs of the mules, and that they were grazing peacefully, they resolved to be careful lest they fall into a trap.

"Charlie," said Wild, "I reckon you had better go back and fetch along the rest. Then we can surround the spot and creep up. That will fix things so we won't get trapped, I reckon. There is one thing certain. They can't attend to us on all sides at one time. I don't believe there are very many of them."

"That's right. I reckon there ain't, Wild. I'll soon have them cowboys here. Ther professor an' ther gals an' two heathens kin hang back some, I reckon."

"Yes, that will be best."

Charlie mounted his horse, and when he had gone about a hundred yards he started at a gallop and soon reached those waiting in the woods.

He quickly told them what was in the wind, and then they all set out with him to return to Wild.

When they got there our hero declared that he had seen nothing of any men, but that he believed they were in hiding somewhere, and meant to trap them.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

Not the least bit of pity or nervousness had the man, who chose to call himself Mystery, shown when he shot down the men; nor did he after it was done.

The Mexican came in answer to his call, and he shook his hands and fairly danced with the delight when he saw his friend standing there with folded arms.

"You did it, Enders! You did it well!" he exclaimed.

Diaz shrugged his shoulders and turned from the scene.

"What are we to do now?" he asked.

"Do? Why just as we meant to do before we met the four traitors."

"Ah! yes, I understand. We must get the treasure to Tombstone."

"We'll do it in a couple of days, too, Diaz. I consider that we have been very lucky. It was a good thing that the four men came along with this copy of the original chart, else we might have been looking for the entrance to the buried temple yet."

He pulled the paper from his pocket and looked it over, a smile of satisfaction creeping over his face.

"Are you going to keep that, now that we have succeeded in getting what we came for?" asked the Mexican.

"Keep it? Certainly. Why not?"

"Well, that was stolen from Professor Janeway. It is not nice to be caught with stolen goods, you know."

"Well, we might as well say that we stole the treasure from him, then. He was the first to get the information about the gold that was here."

"Well, that is so. It matters not, I suppose. Only the paper is no good to you now."

"Now then," said Mystery, after he had thought a minute. "I suppose we may as well stop right here for a couple of hours so the animals may have a good rest. I

don't mean right here, for I don't exactly like our surroundings. We will move ahead a little."

His companion nodded, and then they proceeded to swing the bags of treasure over the backs of the mules.

Mystery soon got ahead, and then they went all right.

As the man was riding along he came suddenly upon a trail that caused him to give a violent start.

"Great Jupiter!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "We have come straight back to the place we set out from with the gold. Diaz, come here!"

The Mexican hurriedly rode up.

He, too, recognized the spot.

"What are you going to do now, Enders?" he asked, his jaw dropping.

"Well, there isn't anything to do but to take a rest, and then start out again," was the reply.

"I suppose that is right."

They were soon halted near the mouth of the passage that led down into the apartments of the ruins.

They ate the noonday meal in the same place they had eaten it the day before, and yet they had covered a good many miles in the interval.

"Suppose Young Wild West should find our trail leading this way," said Diaz, when they had eaten, and were resting and smoking under the shade of the trees.

"It might be a good idea to climb up somewhere and have a look around, to see if they are in sight—I mean Young Wild West and his friends," Mystery answered.

Then he arose himself, and selecting the highest point near at hand, he started to climb up.

He was not long in reaching it, and then, as he looked over the back trail, he saw our friends coming something like two miles away.

Down he came as quick as he could.

"We must throw the treasure back into the passage and put the big slab over it," he exclaimed.

The two worked hard and got all the gold into the opening.

Then they covered it with the slab, and leaving the mules and extra horses they had right where they were, they took their own and went off to a point where they might watch the scene, and be ready to leave, if it became necessary, at the same time.

They saw our friends come there, and then, when they found how cautious Wild and Charlie were, they decided that there was but one chance for them to hold the treasure, and that was to frighten them from the spot.

Meanwhile we will turn our attention to Young Wild West and his friends.

Our hero and his partners and the cowboys were not long in surrounding the spot, and so well did they work it that Mystery and Diaz were baffled from seeing those who came on the side they were hiding.

When this was done to his satisfaction, Wild waited for nearly half an hour.

Half the afternoon was gone by this time, and he decided that it was time to do something.

He soon crept up to the spot where the opening had been, and finding it closed, came to the conclusion that the villains must have stored the treasure there.

He meant to find out, anyhow, so he asked Jim and

Dick Ball to take a couple of lariats and a lantern and go around and get into the underground place by means of the chute.

This they soon did, and, as the reader knows, the treasure was there.

After Wild had received their report he thought a moment, and then said:

"Well, there is one thing certain, and that is that the villains are around here somewhere. We will wait until after dark, and then we'll start in to get the treasure out. There is no use of carrying it through the other way, and then hauling it up the chute. We will keep a watch right here, and maybe we will get the galoots before that time."

After what seemed to be a long wait, night came.

Wild and Charlie took a lantern and went to the slab of rock and lifted it.

Arietta, followed by Hop, climbed to the window that was in the part of the temple left above the surface. The rest of our friends were scattered around, guarding the treasure spot.

Charlie went down into the hole and began passing up the treasure.

It was just then that something happened.

Suddenly a bright light flashed through the darkness, completely drowning that given out by the lantern.

There was a clatter of hoofs, and the Headless Horseman dashed by, holding the head with the fiery eyes at arms' length.

Crang! It was Jim Dart who fired, and with a shriek of agony, the mysterious figure threw up its arms and fell from the saddle.

That settled "a mystery of Old Mexico."

Diaz saw what happened, and he turned and galloped away from the scene. Our friends had not seen him, nor did they ever, for he did not show up in Tombstone.

This about ends our story, for there is no need of going into details as to how the treasure was taken to Tombstone and divided.

The paper had been found on the body of Enders, and the professor took possession of it.

It was a nice little pile that our hero and his partners made out of the adventurous trip into Old Mexico, and the professor gained all the honor of the discovery of the ancient temple.

But that was only one of the many thrilling adventures our hero had passed through, and the author is glad to be able to state that he will keep right at it until all that are worth printing shall be told.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST STANDING A SIEGE; or, HOW ARIETTA SAVED HIM," which will be the next number (354) of "Wild West Weekly."

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WILD WEST WEEKLY

NEW YORK, JULY 23, 1909.

Terms to Subscribers.

Single Copies.....	.05 Cents
One Copy Three Months.....	.65 "
One Copy Six Months.....	\$1.25
One Copy One Year.....	2.50

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

In Australia are to be found the largest, heaviest and most peculiar nests in the world. These are the nests of the jungle fowl, so-called, and are built in the form of great mounds, the average measurement in height being 15 feet, and the circumference 150 feet. The nests are erected in secluded sheltered spots and, as in the case of the small nests of birds, they are skillfully interwoven with leaves, grass and twigs, and such other suitable material as the fowl may be able to procure. A similar system is followed by the bush turkey, whose home is, however, more comprehensive in design. Its shape is pyramidal. It has been asserted by Australian naturalists that the nests of the bush turkeys, which live in colonies, are so large that to move them requires the services of six or seven men. The material of a single nest has been found to weigh upward of five tons.

Twelve years ago, when the villagers living off the borders of Reigate Heath, Surrey, England, had no place to worship nearer than the parish church, a service was held in a school-room close by and was so well attended that the authorities looked around for a suitable permanent building. The erection of a church was out of the question, but there stood on the heath the remains of an old mill, a picturesque feature in a beautiful bit of landscape. Inspection showed that once the rats were got rid of a comparatively small outlay would furnish and render the mill fit for public worship, and soon it was opened as the Chapel of the Holy Cross. The interior of the chapel arouses interest, says the Wide World Magazine. Four buttresses, four feet thick by six feet in height, serve as rests for two massive beams which cross each other in the center and support an upright shaft cracked with age and strongly bound with iron bands. The buttresses make four natural alcoves. The entrance door stands in one, and immediately opposite is the altar; the harmonium is placed in a third, and the bellringer sits close beside it and rings his bell; the fourth is occupied by the congregation. The rent of this novel church is only 25 cents a year.

A grandfather's clock which has long been an heirloom in an old family in the town of Bosingstoke, England, affords shelter to what appears to be a ghost. At the approach of midnight each night the otherwise peaceful "grandfather" becomes eager to take a walk, evidently thinking a little exercise will do him good and limber up his old bones. The ticking suddenly changes into a deep and peculiar thumping,

the clock increases in stature, while a pair of gray feet protrude from beneath its base. Passing through transitional stages the thumping is replaced by a spasmodic breathing and wheezing, and upon the stroke of twelve the pendulum-door opens, revealing an enormous ashy gray hand with mal-shaped fingers. The clock face disappears, displaying a frightful gray head, large and round, with abnormally long pale-blue eyes. Beyond a quiet stroll, which causes weird tappings along the landings during the night, the apparition is inoffensive, and is said to prove of great service in sending every one early to bed.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"Well," said Mrs. Casey, proudly, "my Dennis was wan o' the pallbearers at the funeral o' the rich Michael Hooligan th'day." "Ay!" retorted Mrs. Cassidy, jealously, "'twas well-fitted fur the job yer husband was; shure, he's used to carryin' the bier that some wan else pays fur."

Mrs. Flynn had just moved into the neighborhood and an old friend dropped in for a visit. "And are yez on callin' terms wid yer next door neighbor yet?" "Indade Oi am. Oi called her a thafe an' she called me another."

Gentleman (arising in street car)—Won't you take my seat, madam? The Suffragette—No, sir; I will not. You are entitled to it until such time as we women have something to say about the framing of laws governing public conveyances."

Silas—I swan, squire, but my old mare has just chawed up my pocketbook. The Squire—Don't worry, Sile, that will make her go so fast she is liable to win the races at the fair. Silas—Why so, squire? The Squire—Well, you know, money makes the mare go.

"I guess paw must have passed a lot of time at the dentist's when he was in New York," said Johnny Green. "Why do you think so?" queried his ma. "Cause I heard him tell a man to-day that it cost him nearly \$800 to get his eye-teeth cut," replied Johnny.

The clerk was about to wrap up two pair of gloves that an exacting customer had finally decided to buy. "Please put them in separate parcels," said the customer. "Oh, buying for someone else?" was the clerk's comment, and the customer replied: "Yes, for a separate lady."

"I understand that your wife and daughters have acquired several foreign languages." "Yes," answered Mr. Cumrox, "when they're having a good time in society, or at the opera, they talk French or Italian. But when it comes to telling their troubles they get back at plain English, so that I can take a hand."

Mary, five years old, and Stella, who was about the same age, were talking about their future dreams. "When I grow up," said Mary, "I'm going to be a school teacher." "Well, I'm going to be a mother with four children," said Stella. "Well, when they come to my school I'm going to whip them, whip them, whip them!" "You mean thing!" said Stella, as the tears came into her eyes. "What have my poor children ever done to you?"

CAPTIVE AND PROPHET

By KIT CLYDE.

To this very day, the central portions of Australia are as much unknown as was the source of the River Nile, ten or fifteen years ago.

Some parts of the coast are inhabited, while others are not.

Your geography will tell you that the land of Australia slopes, or, more properly speaking, rises gradually as you proceed inland, and it is presumed the center of the island or continent is a great series of table-lands.

But what has this to do with the story, you ask?

We shall see.

Among the early inhabitants of Australia was John Barrow, his wife, and two sons, Edward, aged fifteen, and Charlie, twelve.

It is with Edward we have to deal.

Mr. Barrow was a broken-down merchant, yet he had gone to Australia with not a little money, wherewith to help himself along.

He entered into business with the natives, and by fair dealings and upright acting got along admirably; but, as has been the case time and again, a disturbing element came in, in the shape of other traders who sought to gain what rightfully they had no claim to.

This of course bred bad feeling, and finally gave rise to the world-famous bushrangers, or, as others have termed them, bushwhackers.

That these bushrangers proved a terrible curse to that country, everybody knows.

As times progressed and Mr. Barrow was able to afford it, he purchased for Edward, then almost sixteen, a handsome and fleet-footed pony.

It was Edward's delight to jump on Gip's back, and take a scamper across the fields before breakfast, or, that over, to take his neat little gun across his saddle-bow and start out in quest of adventure, either in the shape of game or a trial of skill with some of the native horsemen.

It was at about this period that the bushrangers became more aggressive, and Mr. Barrow warned Edward not to go too far in his excursions into the country.

For some days Edward restricted himself in the length of his rides, then as nothing occurred of an alarming character he extended them.

One day when a greater distance from home than usual Gip became frightened, and clasping the bit between his teeth he started on a sharp run, and held on his way despite his rider's most vigorous attempts to check him.

On—on—over hill and through dale, the flying horse carried Edward. On—on—unceasingly on.

As they were pursuing this wild, aimless career, the air was filled with a crowd of flying javelins, hurled at the horse and rider.

Several of them struck Edward, but did not unseat or materially hurt him, and still on Gip flew.

They had gone but a short distance when Gip stopped in his wild flight so suddenly that his rider went nearly over his head.

Edward recovered himself quickly and glanced around for the cause of Gip's fright; the animal now having sank back on his haunches and trembling like a leaf in an October breeze.

Soon he saw the cause.

In the overhanging branches of a tree just ahead he saw a pair of greenish, glaring eyes, and stretched along the limb the lithe, supple body of a panther, who, with back slightly

erected, and tail waving to and fro in serpentine movements, looked a beautiful though fear-inspiring sight.

But a moment things remained so, for the next instant the dark body came hurtling through the air toward the young lad, who, seeing it coming, slipped from the saddle and struck Gip a smart blow on the haunches that sent him flying from the spot.

The panther struck where but a moment before both rider and horse had been, and apparently enraged at his being balked, he turned his attention to the lad, and quickly crouching, he took a flying leap toward Edward.

It failed, for at the moment of the spring Edward jumped nimbly aside; then, ere the panther could turn, he raised his rifle and taking aim sped a bullet into the animal's head.

Instead of killing it, it seemed to give the ferocious beast new life, for with nimble, supple bounds he shortened the space between himself and the prey he wanted.

With rifle discharged, Edward's only means of defense was a small but sharp hunting-knife.

When five or six feet away the panther paused momentarily, then sprang; as he did so, Edward dropped to the ground, and as the panther passed above him gave an upward dig with his knife that made a long gash in his side.

Quickly the wounded animal turned and turned again, rushing, jumping forward, backward, sideways, any way. It was horrible. Quick as a flash, here and there, the panther darted.

At last his claws were sunk deep into Edward's shoulders, and he was borne to the earth. The fiendish mouth, with its terrible fangs, was wide open, and directed toward his throat.

Edward could count the seconds of life that remained for him unless help came.

With a fiendish malevolence the panther seemed desirous of playing with his victim, and made numerous mimic offers at Edward's throat.

Feeling that it was a matter of life and death, he stood boldly up and faced his terrible antagonist, with nothing to defend himself but his fancy knife.

But suddenly comes a wild yell, and from the bush dart forth a number of bushrangers.

At sound of their voices, the panther's jaws came together with a fear-inspiring snap, a low, fierce growl rolled from his mouth, his body arched, hair bristled, and tail moved.

He dug a paw into Edward's shoulder, and the latter cried out in agony, which attracting again the animal's attention, would have resulted in his death had not one of the bushrangers, more courageous than the rest, darted forward, and with a stunning blow from a huge club laid the animal senseless on the ground.

It required but a minute or two to effectually dispatch him.

A few words from the chief, and several of the men picked Edward up and carried him between them, while another carried Edward's rifle and knife.

For three days they traveled, and during that time they were as careful of Edward as if he had been a baby.

They finally reached the end of their journey, a long valley, between two high, stupendous hills. Here the place was covered by rude mud huts by the thousands, some larger, some smaller.

Edward was conveyed to one of the larger, whose doorways and walls were covered with straw, but whose floor was Mother Earth.

Sitting in the doorway, Edward could see all over the valley, and he was surprised to see from all quarters, at all hours of the day, coming little bands of Australian blacks.

The concourse momentarily grew larger.

While puzzling his brain for a solution of the gathering numbers, the truth struck him—it was the great festival of Wishtenog, the Deity of the blacks, at which it was currently

reported they offered living sacrifices, the latter being usually a number of their enemies, or, at a pinch, the old and useless members of their own tribe.

Fearing and dreading the result to himself, Edward wanted to get his rifle into his hands.

Having no knowledge of firearms, the blacks gave it to him. Overjoyed, at having it in his possession, he loaded it and kept it closely beside him.

Night came and passed. With morning's first light he was awakened by a rude shaking, and opening his eyes, he saw bent over him the dusky form of an Australian black, who signified by motions that he was wanted.

With a horrible fear surging through his heart, Edward allowed the fellow and a companion to carry him out of the hut, and, by a winding course, to where were gathered in one mass all of the bands who had straggled in the day before.

Through the crowd to an open space in the center they bore him, then sat him down upon the ground near where a narrow trough was scooped out in the ground, which was now filled with dry fagots, while stretched laterally across were a number of larger sticks.

Their purpose was plain, and Edward knew what was coming.

They commenced a wild, weird dance, the air ringing the while with elfin laughter, and fiendish shoutings.

This ended, they caught the lad up, and threw him upon the pile of fagots.

Meanwhile, he had clung to his rifle, and as if by inspiration, the thought rushed in his mind that perhaps it might prove the salvation of his life.

Edward had heard one word frequently repeated during the previous day, and then in a wild dance.

He repeated it now, solemnly and slowly:

"Wishtenog," and with his disengaged hand pointed mysteriously upward.

They let go of him, and raising up, he next staggered to his feet, pointed at a bird flying in the air above them, raised his rifle, aimed, fired; with a wild, circuitous flight the bird slowly descended until it fell at the feet of an old and grizzled savage, who proved to be the grand master of ceremonies, and who carried in his hand an old flintlock musket, which, however, he knew not the use of, he thinking it intended as a first-class club.

Edward motioned them to hand him one of the flintlocks.

Having it he put in a charge, primed it, picked the flint which still remained in the clamps, pointed at a swallow skimming the ground not far off, aimed, and fired.

A flutter, and the swallow was lying prone on the ground, motionless, lifeless.

The festival came to an ending differently than it ever had before.

A prophet had been sent them from Wishtenog; so said the priests, or those who professed to deal with the mysterious agencies.

At a command from the chief of ceremonies, one Rullantom, Edward was carried back to the hut from which he had been taken.

While sitting here, a number of natives entered the hut from the opposite side. They were Rullantom and his three aids, all of whom carried old flintlock muskets, which now they handled most reverently.

This delegation passed his attendants, one of whom sat back against the wall, puffing out clouds of smoke from his mouth as they were drawn from his nidgeerah (native word signifying pipe).

Advancing, Rullantom bent, picked up Edward's hand, and by kissing it, signified the allegiance he thus acknowledged.

"I am your slave," said he, as a second time he reverently kissed Edward's hand.

Time passed on; the festival still continued, protracted by the presence of the prophet from Wishtenog.

A few exhibitions in parlor magic which were calculated to deceive the natives confirmed Edward's fame, and he felt that for the present he was safe.

A week more passed, and the festival began to wane in vigor of manifestations; numbers left day after day, and finally, given to understand that he was to be attached to Rullantom's tribe, and taken in charge by that individual, they left the valley.

Several days later, to Edward's great surprise, he saw Gip's well-known form to one side of the narrow path they were pursuing. A whistle from Edward, well known by Gip, caused the animal to prick up his ears; another moment the animal came to him on a gallop, and reaching his master, laid his head upon his shoulder.

Edward vaulted upon his back, when Gip, aware of who was astride of his back, capered round as playful as a kitten.

His fame was not enough to bind him to the savages, for he knew that it could not be lasting, and knew that some treacherous one among them, jealous of him, might with one stroke of the huge axes they carried, send him to kingdom come, at almost any moment.

He determined, now that he was astride of his fleet-footed pony, to make a break for liberty.

The opportunity soon came; he had cantered on ahead for a short distance, and a bend in the narrow road concealed him from view.

"Now, Gip, on with you!" he cried, and he dug his heels into his pony's sides.

With a wild dash and he was off, clattering with a wild fury along the narrow, hilly and oftentimes stony path.

On, on, he dashed.

He met one party, and, amid a shower of flying javelins and huge axes, dashed through them unscathed.

Another party he caught up to and dashed through before they had discovered what the flying objects were.

After him the fleet-footed but unmounted natives rushed; but it was useless, they could not catch him.

Ten, twenty, thirty miles had been gone over, and Gip was becoming distressed.

Edward dismounted, and leading him into the brush, out of sight, allowed him a breathing spell of over an hour.

Then into the saddle and away again.

The night-shadows fell, but still he pursued his course. Once again he paused to breathe Gip, and then on again they went like the wind.

Morning broke, and from an eminence the fagged-out rider of an exhausted horse saw but a few miles distant the little settlement where his home was situated.

He took it slow and easy after that, and arrived home at last, much to the delight of an astonished father, who had long since given up as lost his much-loved son.

It took weeks for Gip and Edward to recover from the excitement and fatigue which had accompanied the lad's experience as a slayer of panthers, a captive and prophet.

Edward Barrow is now a full-grown man, a resident of Australia to this day.

The bushrangers are a thing of the past, practically speaking, although there are still there some followers of the name.

This story of his early experience there has again and again been recounted to groups of sympathizing, excited listeners, from one of whom these details of the affair came to my knowledge.

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